



Megiddo Message

WHEN WAS CHRIST BORN?

March 31, 1956

Volume 43, Nos. 6, 7

The Megiddo Message

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Percy J. Thatcher, Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone, THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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This issue of THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a combination of our True Christmas and New Year, and Easter numbers. As these events are so close together we feel it most appropriate to present evidence and other thoughts pertaining to these events in one issue. We hope you will find it interesting, enjoyable, and an assistance in rendering the honor due our Saviour.

Extra copies of this issue are available at 15 cents each.

The next issue will be dated April 21.

Our Cover

The illustration on our cover is an artist's conception of old Jerusalem at the dawn of the new year which began with the visible moon of Abib. In their anxiety to know the moment of the new moon, the Jews stationed watchers upon the mountains who maintained a keen lookout for the first sight of the Abib crescent. Immediately when the silver arch was sighted, heralds carried the news to the Sanhedrin.

In the city of Jerusalem, the people were notified through the sounding of the shophar by the priest. The news was broadcast throughout Palestine by means of signal fires which were lighted on the mountains near Jerusalem.

Until the fourth century after Christ the beginning of the month was fixed in Palestine in this manner.

Special Abib Services

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Megiddo Mission Church

Wednesday Evening, April 11, 7:30

"THE QUEST OF THE AGES"

A dramatic presentation showing—

Man's arduous search for LIFE, and ultimate attainment.

Morning Service, April 12, 8:00

Dinner in Church Dining Room, 12:30

Children's Program, 2:30

Thursday Evening, April 12, 7:30

Program to feature—

"CHRIST'S FREEMAN"

(Onesimus, Paul's Son in the Faith)

Contents

Articles

This Year, Your Ship	3
The Messiah	4
When Was Christ Born?	7
No Room!	26
The Dead Sea Scrolls	27
The Angel of Gethsemane	29

Special Features

Springtime in Palestine	6
Significant Days of the Bible year	10
Gleanings	12
A Home Christmas Service	31
Greetings to Spring	32

Stories

Jesus' Last Week	13
Susan Was Brave	21
Shepherds	21
A New Discovery Abroad	23

Regular Departments

Your Questions Answered	11
Meditations on the Word	22

Poetry

The Old, Old Story	9
The Will of God	29
A New Year Wish for You	31

Instructive Booklets

In addition to the MESSAGE you should by all means read the following booklets. Each booklet is a complete subject of itself. The Bible is made understandable and interesting to study.

**HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?**

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD
THE GREAT APOSTASY
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?
HELL AND THE DEVIL
SPIRITUAL CREATION
THE HOLY SPIRIT
THE SABBATH
TRINITY**

Complete set	\$2.25
Single copies20
History40

The Children's Books Division of the Megiddo Mission is helping many parents instruct their children correctly. Information concerning books and special lessons may be had on request.

OBITUARIES

MRS. SARAH NEATH

Mrs. Sarah Neath of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, died Friday evening, March 2, having passed her eighty-ninth birthday. Our sister was a devoted reader of Megiddo literature, and as long as health permitted she found pleasure in making occasional trips to the Mission with her son-in-law and daughter, Brother and Sister Willard Yemm, also of Hamilton.

MR. JAMES A. RIMA

On March 6, the Grim Reaper again made his presence felt, plucking from our membership James A. Rima of Groton, N. Y.; age, sixty-eight years. He is survived by his wife, daughter, and a half-sister.

Our brother became interested in Megiddo teachings forty years ago. So attached had he become to the faith in recent years that his smiling countenance was a familiar sight at our Rochester headquarters where he visited frequently. He will be missed.

Funeral services were conducted at the Booth Funeral Home in Groton by Kenneth E. Flowerday, Asst. Pastor of the Megiddo Mission Church.

To all who mourn we extend the sacred hope of the better world to come where life will be eternal, and joy undimmed by tears, for death shall be swallowed up in victory.

Joyous Greetings of Peace and Happiness

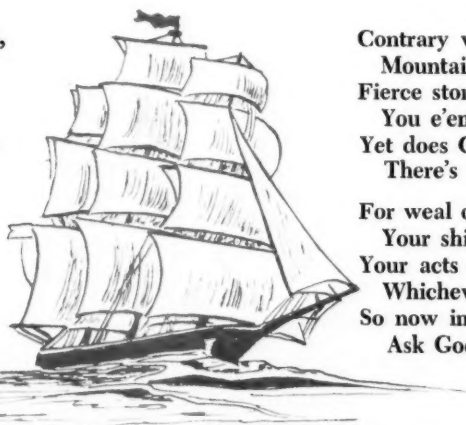
on the True Anniversary of Christ's Birth

April 12, 1956

May the Radiance of Divine Light sent from the Father of Lights illumine your voyage through the coming months with the scintillating beams of Faith and Hope, that courage and perfect trust show the path across the heaving billows to the peaceful Harbor — Beyond.

God built and launched this year for you,
Upon the bridge you stand,
It is your ship, yes, your own ship,
And you are in command.
Just what the twelve months' trip will do
Rests wholly, solely, friend, with you.

Your log book kept from day to day—
My friend, what will it show?
Have you on your appointed way
Made progress—yes or no?
The log will tell, like guiding star,
The sort of captain that you are.



Contrary winds may oft beset,
Mountainous seas may press,
Fierce storms prevail and false lights lure,
You e'en may know real stress,
Yet does God's hand steady the helm,
There's naught can e'er your ship o'erwhelm.

For weal or woe, this year is yours,
Your ship is on life's sea,
Your acts as captain must decide
Whichever it shall be;
So now in starting on your trip,
Ask God to help you sail your ship. —Sel.

This Year, Your Ship

By the mercy of God, the sea of life still stretches out before us. Life! Prolonged life! This itself is full of meaning. Every new day that we arise to greet the dawn, every newborn year that is added to the swiftly mounting aggregate, is a fresh token from heaven—a guarantee, signed, sealed, and delivered to us by a beneficent Heavenly Father, bearing mute but unmistakable assurance of our ability to use wisely that additional allotment of time. As we recognize each new portion of time as a guarantee of our ability, shall we not also hail it as a challenge to demonstrate that ability? Such is the purpose for which is granted this new year which stretches out before us in a vast and uncharted sea.

Humanity at large is adrift upon the great sea of life. But not so the Christian mariner. He plows the stormy main in steady, straight-forward motion, impelled by some powerfully magnetic force. What is it that urges the vessel onward regardless of all the contrary winds that may arise to thwart its progress? It is a supreme objective, far transcending and surpassing the highest and most worthy ideal to which man may otherwise become attached. That objective is the harbor of Zion, and the celestial land beyond. There the surges cease to roll. There lie ten thousand joys far excelling all that mortal thought in its highest flights has ever

conceived or even faintly imagined. Nothing less than this supreme objective of endless, boundless salvation can transform drift to drive, feebleness to force.

Having abandoned the slight and inadequate pleasures which drifting may afford, and ventured our all upon the voyage to the port of Eternity, it is well for us to remember, in the words of the familiar poem:

I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

Indeed, fellow mariner, we are captains each, you and I, in full command of the vessel that we sail. And as captains, no moral catastrophe can occur during the voyage that is not within our power to prevent.

Remember this!

The vicissitudes of the voyage demand of the Christian mariner highly-developed skills, such as are undreamed-of by the idle drifter. There is a time and place aboard the vessel where we are to exercise the limit of our authority—in jurisdiction over the lower nature. There is another time and place where we are to exercise perfect submission—in recognition of the Master-Pilot's leading. Furthermore, we must be equipped with mental readiness to change in an instant from one attitude to the other, when the Pilot's superior wisdom opposes our weak reasoning.

Truth is our Pilot. Upon the vast expanse of life's sea there is none greater, for Truth is faultless; it contains no error in any form. Countless ships are lost upon the heaving sea because they have chosen to rely upon Error for guidance. And so as we greet this new year which comes laden with all manner of heavenly gifts, may God grant us the perception to recognize the Truth as our choicest blessing, far superior to all other gifts. And let us have grace to render thanks to the Giver now and always.

Truth is a perfect navigator in whose custody we can place our souls with the utmost of confidence, certain of the success of the voyage and the arrival at our chosen destination.

THE DESTINATION! That is the all-important purpose of life. That is what we are here for, in order to arrive there. When our ship sails into harbor and is anchored fast to the heavenly shore, how little will seem the storms and the stress and the strain of this brief voyage!

So take heart, fellow mariner. Sail on, sail on and on! and we shall meet some happy day, you and I, on the shores of eternity with multitudes crowding the strand to extend us a welcome. Grandest meeting! sublimest greeting! where the surges cease to roll.

Bon voyage!

THE MESSIAH

ON A SPRING NIGHT in Palestine, in the crowded town of Bethlehem, on the occasion of the solemn New Moon Feast, a Babe was born and laid in a manger. The setting, the surroundings, were simple, pure, and holy. The stars shone brightly above the little town; the night was warm and balmy; and kindly people from among the assembled throng ministered to the comforts of the Child and His mother.

It was the hour to which holy men and Prophets had long looked forward.

But the majority of the people reposing in the City of David that night slept on, all unaware that *the Messiah* had been born into the world in their very midst. God did not inform them because they were a part of a nation that had grown cold and apostate. Jewry did not belong to the inner circle who knew and rejoiced over the glorious event that took place on that holy night.

But the true believers were notified. God Himself took care that the glad tidings of the birth of His beloved Son were swiftly published.

An angelic messenger carried the news to the "wise men," residing in a remote locality, and guided them on their journey to the place where the Babe lay. For one and all, as they received the tidings, felt a longing to behold with their eyes this Child of Prophecy, destined to be the Redeemer of His people.

Outside of Bethlehem the news was revealed to humble men. "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger" (Luke 2: 8—16).

Away in Jerusalem there were others who later heard the glad news:

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2: 25, 26). When the Babe was brought to the temple to be presented before

the Lord, Simeon had the privilege of holding the Child in his arms.

We are told further, "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, . . . a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2: 36—38).

And so at that happy season faithful hearts were made glad. This was the greatest event in all the history of God's people up to that time.

Those who beheld the Infant Jesus rejoiced in the confirmation of their hopes. Their assurance now became substantial and real. Here was something more than type and shadow; it was the fulfillment of promise. To the faith of God's people, the birth of this Child meant everything. For those who were aged, like the saintly Simeon, it was the crowning event of their lives. Having looked upon their future King, they could "depart in peace." It

would be another generation who should witness His appearance as the Great Teacher. But they who beheld only the Infant would see Him resplendent in glory when they should arise in the Resurrection at the last day.

These people were acquainted with the grand plan of the ages, as outlined in Genesis and unfolded by the Prophets. In the priesthood they recognized those types and shadows which pointed to the coming of a greater High Priest "after the order of Melchisedec." As

they looked upon this Child, they knew that centuries of time must yet elapse before Jehovah's plan should be fully consummated, before the Christ should deliver earth from the bondage and corruption of man's rule, bringing to humankind the promised blessings of peace.

Throughout the ages God's people had looked forward with great longing for the appearance of the Messiah.

Jacob prophesied of Him as he lay on his dying bed, reassuring his sons that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49: 10).

Moses said unto his people, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18: 15).

Balaam declared, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel. . . . Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion" (Num. 24: 17—19).

The righteousness of His reign, the glory and power of His Kingdom, were often the subject of Prophecy, and the theme of many a Psalm.

As the time drew near for God to give His Son to the world, the main events surrounding His birth, death, and

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The Father of the world to come, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isaiah 9: 6, 7.

resurrection had been revealed to the believers.

Repeatedly the Prophets had testified that He was to be born of the house of David:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23: 5, 6).

Isaiah wrote: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (Isa. 7: 14, 15).

Micah predicted the place of His birth: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Mic. 5: 2).

To Daniel it was made known "that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off" (Dan. 9: 25, 26).

It was to the next glorious event, His swift, triumphant victory over death and the grave, that the Psalmist had reference when he wrote: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 16: 10).

To God's people in olden days these testimonies were precious, representing their source of knowledge of things to come.

To those whose privilege it was to know the Great Teacher, they were equally precious, for in Christ these prophecies were fulfilled; and the witnessing of their fulfillment gave Divine authority to His message.

And to us they are very precious; for in these last days the foundation of our faith rests upon fulfilled prophecy. And even secular history witnesses to the fulfillment of these prophetic words.

Rich are we with the accumulated revelations, wisdom, and experiences of God's people throughout all ages for our heritage!

.....

Today, as in olden days, the hope of faithful hearts centers about Christ, the coming King. How sweet and full of joy the anticipation that is ours as we draw near the time when He shall come again! It is that time for which men and women have lived and labored and hoped and waited for now nearly six thousand years.

"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16: 28).

These words of the Master were spoken to His disciples and fulfilled to them in a vision, as a type of things to come. But what they saw in vision, another people was to behold in reality!

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as

the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him" (Matt. 17: 1-3).

Jesus, resplendent in glory; Moses, representing those who shall rise from death's slumber; and Elijah, the faithful living; with Peter, James and John, representing the mortal nations who submit, looking on in fear and wonder! When that vision becomes a reality, shall we be there?

We are living in the "last days." Time waits only for the remaining members of Christ's faithful bride to dress themselves in garments pure and holy. It is for them that "the shadows of the evening are stretched out." When the last stone to go into the house of the Lord is made ready and polished, the Lord shall suddenly come to His temple. Then the hope of the people of God, as expressed in the words of the Psalmist, shall be fulfilled:

"Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. . . . He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: and all nations shall call him blessed" (Ps. 72: 1, 2, 4-8, 17).

Are we tired with viewing the sin and iniquity of this present world, the corruption on every hand, the tyranny, the poverty, the suffering, and bloodshed of war? Do our hearts yearn for our Lord to come? It is only by "holy conversation and godliness" that we can "hasten the coming of the day of God" (II Pet. 3: 11, 12). Therefore, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12: 1, 2).

.....

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. . . ."

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13: 32, 35-37).

As the people of old, surrounded by an apostate world, waited for the confirmation of their hopes; so we wait for the realization!

One of these days the herald of the Prince of Peace will appear upon the scene. "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things" (Matt. 17: 11). Then the devout ones whose lives are spared to see that Day, like the faithful Simeon, shall experience the power of the Holy Spirit, and be given the reassurance that they shall not

(Continued on page 30)



Springtime in Palestine

SPRING is the most delightful season of the year in the Holy Land. The skies are bright, the air balmy, and the vernal sun lights up the landscape with a thousand forms of beauty.

The valleys and the hills are clothed with verdure, the fields are green with grains and grasses. The herds of camels are grazing on the meadows, the flocks of sheep and goats go gamboling up the mountain-sides. In all the glens, on all the vast prairie-plains, and over all the highest mountains, are flowers blooming—anemones, oleanders, amaranths, arbutuses, poppies, hollyhocks, daisies, hyacinths, tulips, pinks, lilies, and roses—growing in unbounded profusion, delighting the senses, and transforming the land into a garden of flowers.

Reasons Why Christ Was Born in the Spring

1. GOD'S YEAR BEGAN IN THE SPRING

"Abib . . . shall be the first month of the year." —*Exodus* xii. 2; xiii. 4.

"Abib" means "sprouting, budding month, beginning with the new moon of April or March."

—*Hebrew Lexicon*.

2. CHRIST WAS BORN AT THE NEW YEAR

Israel observed the month Abib, as commanded. —*Deuteronomy* xvi. 1.

It was a custom of the family of David, —*First Samuel* xx. 5, 6.

and of his descendants. Mary and Joseph were at the Abib Feast when Christ was born. —*Luke* ii. 1—14.

Reasons Why Christ Was Not Born on December 25

1. IN PALESTINE SHEEP ARE SHELTERED IN THE FOLD FROM NOVEMBER TO MARCH

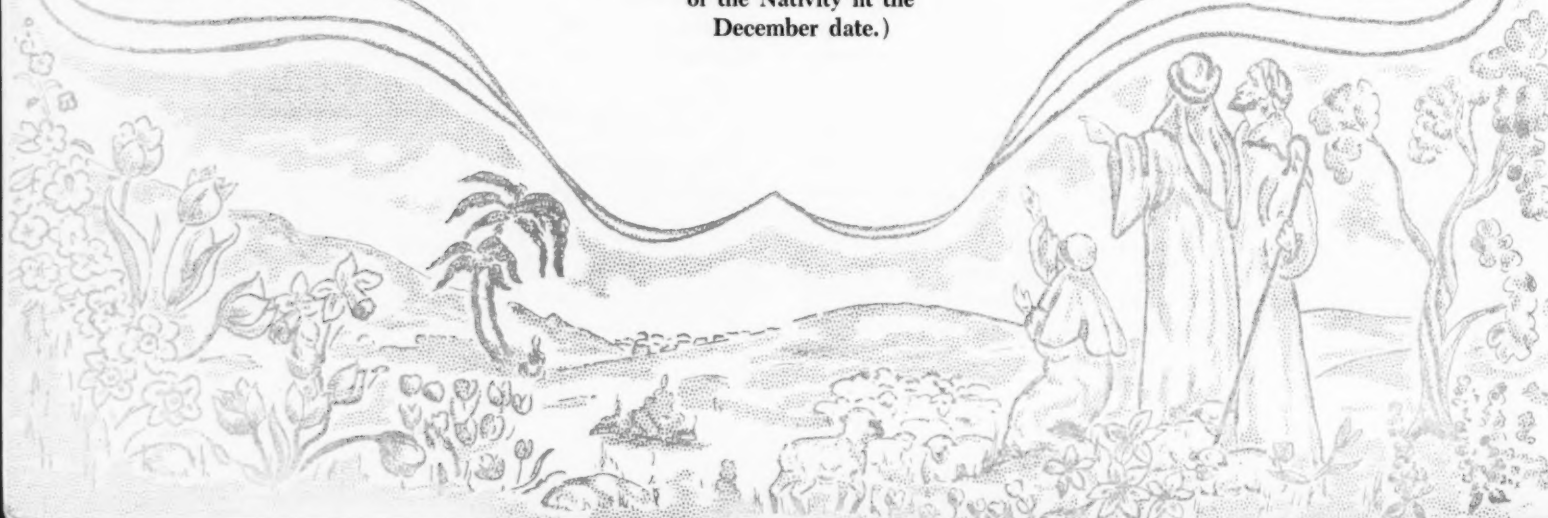
But at the time of the Nativity, "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." —*Luke* ii. 8.

2. ROADS WERE IMPASSABLE IN WINTER, TAXATION IMPOSSIBLE

But at the time of the Nativity, "Joseph also went up from Galilee, . . . unto the city of David; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife."

—*Luke* ii. 4, 5.

(None of the circumstances
of the Nativity fit the
December date.)



When Was Christ Born?

THE date of the birth of Christ has been a debated issue for centuries. Nearly every month of the year has been selected by some eminent scholar or historian as the time of the Nativity, with the result that much of the printed matter on the subject is contradictory and confusing. However, by popular consent, December 25 is the day commemorated throughout all Christendom. But—

Was Christ Born on December 25?

No! Amid all the controversy, here is one point upon which scholars agree. December 25 is not the date of the Nativity, nor was it observed as such until about the middle of the fourth century, and then, only as a matter of compromise.

At that time, two powers were vying for supremacy—paganism and papacy. The papacy secured her objective; but it is one of the saddest facts of history that, in so doing, she sacrificed principle for prestige. She converted the world, but in turn was herself converted to the world's customs.

The case of Christmas is one of many examples:

From time immemorial December 25 was a festive occasion observed with great rejoicing in pagan lands. It was the birthday of the sun. The Church, perceiving that their new converts had a liking for this festival, resolved that the Nativity should be commemorated on that day. Actually, the ecclesiastics found it impossible either to suppress so ancient a custom or to prevent the people from identifying the birth of Jesus with the birth of the sun. Therefore, they resorted to the artifice so frequently employed and so openly admitted by the Church, namely, that of giving a Christian significance to an irrepressible pagan rite.

The institution of this new date for the Nativity was evidently of Western origin, the worship of Mithra* having been the most powerful in the West; gradually its observance moved eastward. The Churches of Syria and Armenia, however, were horrified at the selection of such a date, it being the recognized date of the birthday of various pagan sun-gods; and they hotly accused the Western Church of sun-worship and idolatry. They knew that Jesus was often spoken of as "the Sun," and He was very nearly identified in pagan minds with Mithra; and they felt that the adoption of the sun's birthday as the birthday of Jesus was an unjustifiable admission of the power of heathendom. Nevertheless, the Eastern Churches were forced in the end to acquiesce.

Thus December 25th became established as Christmas Day, not for the accuracy of the date—indeed, no one asserted the date to be accurate—but for its appeal to the new membership.

In examining the evidence on this much-disputed subject, WHEN WAS CHRIST BORN?, we should like to consider further phases of the December date before eliminating it entirely from the focus of possibilities.

An integral feature of the ever-beautiful account of the Nativity is: "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8).

Would the usual climatic conditions in Palestine permit such a scene in December? No!

McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia provides this impressive statement: Christ's birth "could not at all events have fallen in December or January, since at that time of the year the flocks are not found in the open fields during the night, but in pens."

Schaff's Church History states the equivalent: "The time of pasturing in Palestine, which has but two seasons, the dry and the wet, or summer and winter, begins . . . in March and lasts until November."

An Englishman, Leslie Farmer, army chaplain in World War II and author of "We Saw the Holy City," contributes evidence of a similar nature. Mr. Farmer found it his privilege to be stationed at Jerusalem where he did chaplain duty and in addition acted as guide to tourists who wished to see the Holy City and environs. He comments:

"In winter in Jerusalem we often wore greatcoats and gaitered boots as we splashed through the snow.

"I shall not soon forget a trip to Hebron to peer into the Cave of Machpelah, where the sepulchres of the Patriarchs have been hidden for centuries. My car was snow-bound, amid freezing wastes, until natives on camels that slipped silently through the snow came and dug us out."

One year on the traditional Christmas, Mr. Farmer was called to act as guide to a party of soldiers on leave who wished to see Bethlehem. The weather interfered. He writes:

"Nobody I met had elsewhere known such rain as fell



Bethlehem under snow on December 25

* Mithra: A Persian god of light, often brought into close association with the sun, and identified as *Sol Invictus* (the "Unconquerable Sun").

on the Holy Land at Christmas that year. It rained without a pause for five days and nights: heavy, cold, and drenching. . . . On Christmas Eve I had planned a carol-singing expedition. . . . But, apart from our singing *en route*, there was no possibility of carols at Bethlehem. With macs and rubber ground-sheets over our heads, we ran from the buses across the courtyard into the Church of the Nativity. . . . Three days later the heavy rain turned to snow, and I saw a real old English Christmas scene at Bethlehem with a thick white blanket over fields and houses round the Church of the Nativity."

This evidence pronounces the presence of the shepherds on the Judean hillsides in December—and, that at night—relatively improbable, if not entirely impossible.

One more circumstance of the Nativity remains to be examined. It was the occasion of an enrollment and taxation ordered by the Roman government. The Romans were noted for reasonable rule, and it is inconceivable that taxation would have been required at a season when the roads become muddy, deep and slippery. *Schaff's Church History* states pointedly: "A census, which made traveling necessary, would not have been ordered at this season." Furthermore, the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was some eighty miles and would have been an ordeal altogether intolerable in mid-winter for Mary in her condition.

By these three points of evidence—the pagan influence which compelled the December dating, climatic conditions which prohibit pasturing sheep in December and also which would have prevented winter travel for taxation—it must be conceded that Christ was not born on December 25.

Let us consider the census in further detail. If we can ascertain an appropriate time for the enrollment, then we shall have secured some clue as to the season of the Nativity.

It is not to be assumed that Jewish peculiarities entered greatly into any general schedule by Cæsar from Rome, who ordered the census. However, the Syrian governor, Cyrenius, deputed by Cæsar to oversee the Palestine enrollment, would be informed on Jewish customs. He would know that to them the Passover was the most important and universal observance of the year. On this occasion, the fourteenth of the month of Abib, the entire nation, more or less, could be found regimented by their respective family trees in commemoration of the original passover instituted by Moses 1,500 years before. This traditional celebration of the Exodus would stand out sharply in the eyes of a Roman tax collector as the time to obtain a systematic listing of the whole country.

The question then arises, Did Joseph and Mary arrive at the inn on the eve of the 14th of Abib?

Was Christ Born on the Passover?

No! There are at least two good reasons why this was not the date of the Nativity.

First: "His parents" always observed the Passover in Jerusalem, not Bethlehem, as is plainly testified by Luke 2: 41.

The second testimony to this point not only confirms the first, but fixes both the time and place for the birth of Jesus.

As decreed by Moses, the Jews kept another special

sacrifice or feast at this season. It was the New Moon Feast of Abib occurring Abib 1st. Moses actually commanded every beginning of the month or new moon as a sacrifice (see Num. 28: 11, 14; 10: 10). In fact "month" in the Hebrew signifies "the new moon; the day of the new moon; the calends of a lunar moon, *which was a festival of the ancient Hebrews.*" However, special importance was attached to the New Moon Feast of Abib, as Moses stipulated: "Observe the month [new moon] of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 16: 1). They were expressly required to observe two feast days in Abib—the *month* or new moon, as well as the *Passover*.

Let no one consider these customs as unimportant and therefore subject to any laxity of observation. We are dealing with the history of the Jews, whose zeal and intensity and whose meticulous letter-of-the-law obedience has not been surpassed in human records.

Now the words of David (I Sam. 20: 5, 6) establish vital evidence that this New Moon observance was being kept in his time, 500 years later, and, further, that it had become fixed as a special *yearly* sacrifice for *all* his family. Moreover, for this family it was kept at Bethlehem.

Joseph and Mary were both of the family of David. It is more than safe to assume that this favored couple selected out of all Israel for this highest of commissions were strict and loyal in the laws and customs of their beloved nation.

May we digress from the technical for a moment?

Mary and Joseph were headed for Bethlehem for the New Moon Feast, for Abib 1. Mary in whose heart must have surged and strained more thoughts and emotions, hopes and thrills than we can think, Mary with whom a miracle* was being wrought, Mary the chosen, the quiet young woman who "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart," this princess among women, was thoroughly acquainted with the Prophets and knew that her Babe would be born in Bethlehem†. So on they move for that famous drama, Mary, and Joseph "who was a good man" (Phillips).

Would they allow themselves to reach Bethlehem a day late? Never! Not for all the determination they could command would they be late at such a time as this. Did not the Law read, *Observe the new moon of Abib?* Were they not Jews? Yes, and among the very best God could find. They were not late! But they were not early either. The leeway they had planned was used up. They did not reach Bethlehem a day ahead, a bare minimum at least which such a couple would surely provide. That they arrived at the very climax of the conflux is proved by the necessity of the manger crib, "for there was no room for them in the inn." Furthermore, they arrived so near the "accomplishment of the days" (Luke 2: 6) that there was no time for any but hasty arrangements. It is unthinkable that among those religious people there pres-

* Miracle: Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Isaiah had prophesied that "a virgin" should bear a son (7: 14). At the Annunciation Gabriel had instructed Mary, saying, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1: 35). The angel likewise informed Joseph of the same amazing fact. Read Matt. 1: 18—25.

† Bethlehem: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5: 2).

ent, all of them belonging to one family, the descendants of the house of David (Luke 2: 3, 4), that a more suitable room in the inn would not have been relinquished had there been a day or in fact an hour to spare.

The place of the birth establishes the time.

If Joseph and Mary had reached Bethlehem *early*, there would have been room in the inn. If they had arrived *late* (a day or so after the New Moon Feast), the congestion would have been eased, and room in the inn would have been available. By the clearest of logic, they arrived the evening* of the beginning of the Feast, and the birth took place so immediately that there was no time to negotiate for suitable quarters and they resorted in emergency to the manger.

Jesus Was Born Abib 1

It must be borne in mind that the birth of Christ was by direct divine control; thus the date harbored no element of chance. In fact, every feature of the phenomenon was perfectly controlled and accurately timed. The very night of the Nativity, angels made announcement to the shepherds, "Unto you is born *this day* in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

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Abib is the first month of the Bible year (Ex. 12: 2; 13: 4), defined in the Hebrew Lexicon as "the month of green ears, afterwards called Nisan, beginning with the new moon of April, or, according to the Rabbins†, of March; the first month of the Hebrew year." The equivalent, Nisan, denotes "month of flowers."

Abib is a glorious season of the year in Palestine. All nature is aglow with new life. All the circumstances of the Nativity were possible at this season: sheep at pasture, shepherds on the hillside at night, travel for enrollment.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia states: "The whole month of Nisan is regarded as a prolonged festival." Following the New Moon Feast, those who could afford it journeyed on to Jerusalem for the Passover observance. The interval between afforded ample time for the enrollment.

Gentiles have adjusted and re-adjusted the calendar until now we have the incongruity of September (from the Latin numeral *septem* meaning seven) as the ninth month; October (from the Latin numeral *octo* meaning eight) as the tenth month; November (from the Latin numeral *novem* meaning nine) as the eleventh month; and December (from the Latin numeral *decem* meaning ten) as the twelfth month.

* Evening: Bible time is reckoned from evening to evening (Lev. 23: 32), from 6 o'clock to 6 o'clock, and not from midnight to midnight.

† According to the Rabbins: The definitions of all the Hebrew months indicate that the Rabbins advanced the time and altered the method of calculation. For example, Ziv, the second Hebrew month, is "from the new moon of May to that of June, or according to the Rabbins from the new moon of April to that of May." Originally the Hebrew year began with the first new moon after the vernal or spring equinox. According to the Jewish calendar, Nisan begins with the new moon nearest the equinox, whether preceding or following. In the present year the Jewish calendar introduces Nisan seven days before the equinox, and the month ends at the point where, according to the original Hebrew method of calculation, it should properly begin.

The Jews have come to disregard the sacred year as instituted by Moses, and have perpetuated recognition of the civil year of which Tishri (Sept.—Oct.) is the first month, and the time of their new year observance.

Daniel 7: 25 is fulfilled. The nations—Jews and Gentiles alike—have *changed God's times and laws*.

However, amid a fickle and changing world (intent even now upon still another change in the calendar), the Word of God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. "*I am the Lord, I change not.*" Exodus 12: 2; 13: 4 is unalterable, as binding today as 3,500 years ago when it was uttered: "Abib . . . shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

Zealous in the law of their fathers, Joseph and Mary had journeyed to the city of David, intent upon observing the New Moon Feast, when Jesus was born—Abib 1st.

The Old, Old Story

I love to read the old, old story
Of long ago, yet ever new;
It fills my inmost soul with rapture,
This story old, so sweet and true.
My thoughts go back through long, long ages,
To far-off, lovely fertile plain
Where shepherds keep the spring night watches,
Out on the fields of Bethlehem.

The air is filled with sweetest fragrance
From blooming flowers of early spring;
All nature glowing in fresh beauty,
Its bounteous blessings to men bring.
When, lo, an angel from the heavens
Came down to earth that quiet night.
The shepherds gaze with great amazement,
Speechless and spellbound at the sight.

His glory shone around those shepherds:
Their trembling hearts were sore afraid;
Yet soon the words of that bright angel
At once their troubled fears allayed.
"Fear not," he said, "for I am bringing
Sweet words of comfort to all men."
How we would love to hear them spoken,
Those angel words at Bethlehem!

"Fear not, ye shepherds," said the angel,
"For unto you this day I bring
Glad tidings of great joy from Heaven;
Let all the earth rejoice and sing."
"Give glory to the God in Heaven,
Sweet peace on earth, good will to men,"
Was sung that night by shining angels,
Out on the plains of Bethlehem.

The song the shepherds heard that evening
Those shining hosts will sing again,
And all the earth shall see the glory
The shepherds saw o'er Bethlehem.
The promised Child, the son of Mary,
In manger bed—earth's future King—
Was worshiped by those humble shepherds;
And wise men, treasures to Him bring.

—M. A. L.

Significant Days of the Bible Year

ABIB 1 is New Year's Day.

The Lord spoke thus to Moses: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. . . . This day came ye out in the month Abib" (Ex. 12: 2; 13: 4). Abib means "the month of green ears." The new year begins with the first new moon after the vernal equinox. The first day of the new moon, then, is the first day of the year, the first day of the month, and also the first day of the week. The day is "from even to even" (Lev. 23: 32).

Abib 1 this year (1956) falls on April 12. It begins the evening of Wednesday, April 11, and ends the evening of Thursday, April 12.

Abib 1-3 These were feast days for Israel, and David and his family had a yearly reunion at this time in Bethlehem. (See I Sam. 20). "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day." This was a statute for Israel (Ps. 81: 3, 4; Num. 10: 10).

Because Joseph and Mary were of the house and lineage of David they came to Bethlehem "the city of David," to be taxed. Taxing was not compulsory on Mary but she came with great desire to keep the New Moon and Passover feasts. The taxation and feast had brought many people to the city, and as Joseph and Mary were among the late arrivals there was no place for them in the inn. So there, on the 1st day of the New Moon feast, in a humble place, devoid of all earthly splendor, our Lord was born. The angels announced to the shepherds who were watching their flocks on the hills of Judea:

"UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOUR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD."

Abib 4-6 With the New Moon feast and enrollment in the past, those who could afford it journeyed on to Jerusalem to be present for the Passover.

Abib 7 1st SABBATH of Bible year as observed by the Israelites was a command up to the time of Christ, and which ceased by limitation of the Mosaic law. The day begins with the evening of April 17.

Abib 8 On this day Jesus went to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, where He had raised him from the dead. They made Him a supper, and it was there that Mary anointed His feet with the precious ointment. Jesus said: "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this" (John 12: 1-7).

Abib 9-11 Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a young ass, and much people that had gathered for the feast took palm branches and went to meet Him, saying, "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12: 12-17). He entered the temple and cast out them

that sold, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers. (Matt. 21: 12, 13). Following this, He taught the people for the next several days. At night He abode in the Mount of Olives. The chief priests took counsel how they might take Him.

Abib 12 Jesus astonished His disciples "two days before the Passover" by saying that He is betrayed to be crucified (Matt. 26: 2). Before the close of this day Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Last Supper (Luke 22: 7-13).

Abib 13 THE NEW PASSOVER INSTITUTED
(April 24)

Jesus met with the Twelve on the beginning of Abib 13 to eat the Passover (Luke 22: 14). It was here that He instituted the New Passover. (The anniversary of this event falls on the evening of April 23 this year.) Jesus took the cup and divided it among them, took bread and broke it, and gave it to them; girded Himself and washed the Apostles' feet. He expounded to them chapters 13-16 of St. John. Supper ended, they sang a hymn and went out to Gethsemane. On this same night Jesus was betrayed by Judas, led before Caiaphas, denied thrice by Peter. In the morning He was taken to Pilate. Pilate sent Him to Herod, and Herod returned Him to Pilate. At the 6th hour, 12 o'clock noon, He was crucified; at the 9th hour, 3 o'clock, He died, and before evening He was placed in Joseph's tomb.

Abib 14 2d SABBATH & JEWISH PASSOVER
(April 25)

as kept by the Israelites in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt. (It was to this feast Jesus came with His parents when He was twelve years old.) This day the women rested after the stirring scenes of the crucifixion and prepared spices to anoint Jesus' body the following day.

Abib 15 RESURRECTION DAY or True Easter.
(April 26)

Jesus had lain in the tomb from the close of Abib 13, through the 14th, and "very early in the morning" of Abib 15 when the women "came unto the sepulcher" (Luke 24: 1), they found the sepulcher opened and heard those sweetest words, "He is not here, but is risen." These women reported the incident to the Apostles who did not believe it. That same afternoon Jesus appeared to two of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and reproved them for their slowness of heart to believe. These two disciples returned to Jerusalem and while they were relating their experience to the Eleven, Jesus Himself appeared and made Himself known to them, and again upbraided them for their unbelief.

ASCENSION DAY. Jesus showed Himself to His disciples during the next forty days (Acts 1: 3). He commanded them to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. His ascension is recorded in Acts 1: 9-11. This year the day comes on June 4.

PENTECOST is fifty days after the old Passover, this year June 14. On this day the disciples received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). This was the outpouring of the early or former rain foretold by the Prophet Joel.

Your Questions Answered

BIBLICAL PERSONAL CURRENT



Do you have a question? Personal replies will be sent to Biblical questions to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. **THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE** will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

I enclose a clipping concerning a member of Jehovah's Witnesses who, injured in an automobile accident, died rather than permit a blood transfusion. These people cite the Mosaic prohibition against the eating of blood, in Leviticus 7: 26. Are they right or wrong?

When this ordinance was given (Gen. 9: 4, 5; Lev. 3: 17; 17: 10), there was undoubtedly a sound reason for it, dietary or moral, or both. God was trying to civilize a nation, and savages have always been prone to eat raw meat and drink blood. But it requires a remarkable stretch of the imagination to identify this revolting practice with medical blood transfusions, which have saved many thousands of lives. The resemblance has to be invented, for it certainly does not exist.

A law similar to the Mosaic ordinance, and perpetuated in the Apostolic Church, is recorded in Acts 15: 20. It prohibits the drinking or "tasting of blood" (see Goodspeed's, Moffatt's, and Phillips' translations)—a practice entirely distinct and different from the modern blood transfusion. One is a savage custom, the other a mark of progress in medical science with which no word of Scripture is in disagreement.

The churches have different practices regarding the Lord's Supper, which should not be. From the reading of Matthew 26: 26—28, was the right to give Holy Communion bestowed only on our Lord's Apostles?

This is the claim of the apostate Church, who falsely postulate a succession of Apostles in order to keep the "sacraments" a monopoly in the hands of an ordained priesthood. The Lord's Supper, or New Passover, is not a magical performance in which the emblems become the literal flesh and blood of Christ, but a symbolic rite or memorial, a renewing of our covenant with God. The bread and wine are symbols of the Word of God and the living out of that Word. Paul's instructions and reproofs to the Corinthian Church (I Cor. 11: 20—34) make it clear that the right to officiate was not confined to the Apostles, but is the privilege of any worthy believer in Christ. "Whosoever will" may partake, subject to his own conscience. The primitive Church observed it as given by our Lord and passed on by Paul—an annual, evening observance, on "the same night in which He was betrayed," which was the thirteenth day of the month Nisan, or Abib.

We read in I Corinthians 15: 42—52, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption . . . and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Most of this passage seems to teach that the dead shall be raised immortal, yet v. 52 states that we shall be changed. In order to be changed, we must be raised corruptible, must we not?

Your reasoning is perfectly correct, and in harmony with the Bible. The confusion arises from the use of the word "sown," which many have taken to mean going down to the grave, but which in fact signifies "cast out"—that is, of the grave. The dead are of necessity "sown" or "cast out" just as they went down, corruptible; the physical resurrection merely restores them to the level of the living, that all may appear before the judgment

seat of Christ. The "raising" to incorruption after the approval of the Judge is the better, or chief, resurrection—the change or elevation to immortality.

I would like to ask a question about Hot Cross Buns. In what book and chapter in the Bible are we told about them? Will you please tell me where to find it, and its meaning?

The Bible has nothing to say about hot cross buns, which are a feature of the observance of Lent in the so-called Christian world. While the principle of a season of self-denial is wholesome, Lenten customs are not Apostolic, but date from the ninth century; and this particular custom may go much farther back into the mists of paganism, as do so many other "religious" practices. For instance, we read in Jeremiah 44: 19 of the heathen custom of making cakes to worship the queen of Heaven. This refers, no doubt, to the ancient Egyptian custom of offering sacrificial cakes marked with the horns of the moon goddess. The Greeks and the Romans used sacrificial buns for the same purpose, marking them with a cross signifying the four phases of the moon.

From the second century on, as the Apostasy gained momentum, the sign of the cross was the center of much superstition; in reality, the only cross which matters is that of self-denial, of self-crucifixion, and this cross needs no visible symbol.

Please tell me what is the procedure in becoming a Christian and what Church advocates the doctrine you teach.

To be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ, in word, thought, deed; believe all that He taught; and do as He commands. For basic rules see Luke 9: 23; Rom. 15: 3; I John 3: 3.

We know of no other church which does not teach some error; and none which advocates moral perfection as vital to salvation as Jesus taught ("Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"); or which proves every point of doctrine by the Word (I Thess. 5: 20); or which does not teach "for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matt. 15: 8, 9).

To what extent is an understanding of the word of God necessary in order to gain salvation?

We read in Revelation 1: 3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear [understand] the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein." Knowledge without practice is barren, and the object of our reading and understanding is to enable us to keep the commandments contained in the Book. Therefore the knowledge required is a "working knowledge," sufficient to enable us to recognize and obey the principles of Truth. That is the minimum. The Bible is a deep, deep mine of inexhaustible treasure, and we shall never, in this life, get to the bottom of it all; but there is sufficient plain teaching to guide our feet in the narrow way of righteousness.

ANSWERS TO PICTURE QUIZ FROM PAGE 21

1. David— I Samuel 16: 1—3.
2. Elisha— II Kings 4: 8—37.
3. Moses— Exodus 8: 1—15.

GLEANINGS

I SHALL start where I stand and never mind the past, . . . The past won't help us in beginning new, . . . If we have left it all behind at last, . . . Why that's enough, you're done with it, you're through; . . . This is another chapter in the book, . . . This is another race the Lord has planned, . . . Don't give the vanished days a backward look.

A Morning Prayer

Pour Thou each day, dear Lord, Thy life
Into the chalice of my heart,
That I may rise each morn with Thee
For service set apart.

Fill Thou my soul, each day, dear Lord,
With love for Thy humanity,
That here on earth I may foretaste
Thine immortality.

Find Thou me in the crowded street,
And smile on me, Thy hand in mine,
And life will yield its utmost joy—
A rapture all divine.

Ah, ecstasy beyond all thought!
My life, Thy life will come to be—
Poured daily in my heart until
It empties back in Thee!

THREE things return not, even for prayers and tears:

The arrow which the archer shoots at will; The spoken word, keen-edged and sharp to sting; The opportunity left unimproved.

If thou wouldst speak a word of loving cheer,
Oh, speak it now! This moment is thine own.

If I could live to God for just one day,
One blessed day, from rosy dawn of light
Till purple twilight deepened into night,
A day of faith unflinching, trust complete,
Of love unfeigned and perfect charity,
Of hope undimmed, of courage past dismay,
Of heavenly peace, patient humility—
No hint of duty to constrain my feet,
No dream of ease to lull to listlessness,
Within my heart no root of bitterness,
No yielding to temptation's subtle sway,
Methinks, in that one day would so expand
My soul to meet such holy, high demand
That never, never more could hold me bound
This shriveling husk of self that wraps me round.
So might I henceforth live to God away.

Try, Try Again

'Tis a lesson you should heed,
Try, try again;
If at first you don't succeed
Try, try again;
Then your courage should appear,
For if you will persevere,
You will conquer, never fear;
Try, try again.

Once or twice though you should fail,
Try, try again;
If you would at last prevail,
Try, try again;
If we strive, 'tis no disgrace
Though we do not win the race;
What should you do in this case?
Try, try again.

If you find your task is hard,
Try, try again;
Time will bring you your reward,
Try, try again.
All that other folks can do,
Why, with patience, should not you?
Only keep this rule in view,
Try, try again.

The only conclusive evidence of a man's sincerity is that he gives himself for a principle. Words, money, all things else are comparatively easy to give away; but when a man makes a gift of his daily life and practice, it is plain that the truth, whatever it may be, has taken possession of him.

ARE you in earnest?
Seize this very minute;
What you can do, or dream you can,
begin it.



MAY our garden of virtue this coming year be a place so sweet with the fragrance of pure thoughts, so bright and beautiful with the rare and exquisite blooms of righteous deeds, that angels will love to come and linger there.

Let me be last to criticize,
Let me be first to praise;
For whom I touch in these few hours
May see no future days.

Let me not fix a yoke upon
The soul within a man,
But rather lift the fetters from
His spirit, if I can.

Let me be late to claim my due,
So other folk may live;
Let me be last to chide or blame,
And first one to forgive.

Let me be last at weaving thorns
Into a painful crown;
But first to find one crucified
And gently take him down.

Determination

THERE'S always something waiting to deter you on the way. . . . There'll always be some obstacle to cause you some delay. . . . There'll always be somebody who will try to hold you back. . . . There'll always be an enemy, just waiting to attack. . . . There'll always be that other job to claim your precious hours. . . . There always will be something that will rob you of your powers. . . . Unless you're single-minded, knowing what you want of life. . . . Unless your strength is equal to the endless stress and strife. . . . So fix your purpose—take the road—prepared for every bend . . . and with determination, you will get there in the end.

Let me but do my work from day to day
In the field or forest, at the desk or loom,
In the roaring market-place or tranquil room;
Let me but find it in my heart to say,
When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
"This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
Of all who live, I am the only one by whom
The work can best be done in the right way."

Then shall I see it not too great nor small,
To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerful greet the laboring hours,
And cheerful turn, when the long shadows fall
At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best.

THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE

Jesus' Last Week

*Told by
the Apostle John*



The entry into Jerusalem

HOW shall I tell of that last strange, terrible week with the Master in Jerusalem? Its story has been told and re-told, and we who lived it have lived it over, in our memories, again and again. To us then, it seemed a tragic climax to a great drama, the end of the world. To me now it appears as a nightmare from which we were awakened by His glorious Resurrection Morning.

I, John, the son of Zebedee and Salome, am an old man, the last of the Twelve, but the events of those seven days are as vivid in my mind today as they were half a century ago. How *could* I forget . . . ?

Down the parched, heavily trodden road from Galilee we had come, young, confident, light-hearted, our conversation as bright as our hopes. Around us was the springtime of our native land, and high in our souls was the springtime of all that our land had dreamed of through the centuries of storm and stress.

And why not? Our future was guaranteed by our tall young Leader, the Prophet of Nazareth. Under the spell of His preaching and His personality we had left all, and followed Him. How could we possibly explain or understand our good fortune? Only a short time ago we had been nobodies—humble men, born of obscure parents, plying a hard trade, wrestling an uncertain living, with leaky boats and hand-me-down nets, from the Lake.

And now—we were the intimates of a King!

For this was His secret—and ours. Here in the flesh was the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ, the hope of Israel. And we—we who as peasants

and taxgatherers and fishermen had been unknown, faceless men, moving through monotony toward unmarked graves—were the King's ministers-in-training. Without warning, from the masses He had selected us. Why? We did not know. We did not ask. It was enough to be near Him, to love and to be loved, to share His hope of future glory.

Now we were disciples of a Master; in time we, too, would be masters. Today we served; tomorrow we should sit with Him in His throne. The thrones we visioned on the near horizon were so real to us that we, to our shame, found time on the road to squabble over which should be ours and who should be the greatest. We were on the verge of realizing ambitions which we, like the rest of our nation, had from our childhood grossly misunderstood.

So, as we strode down that sunny road, we were smiling and satisfied and supremely happy. Nothing was too clear . . . but everything was simply wonderful. Nothing was very definite . . . except that everything was just as it should be.

.

The week began peaceably enough, with our arrival in Bethany, just outside Jerusalem. When we reached the hospitable door of Lazarus, the Master was at home, and so were we all. Only those who have been homeless can know what that means. When far from our home in Bethsaida and Capernaum, we had often slept with only the dome of midnight for our

roof. In summer days, that mattered little; but there were nights of rain and chill when, through the enmity of men or because no one cared, the Lord and we were at the mercy of the elements. But here, all was different. To be where love reigned and peace filled the heart, where all was harmony and happy fellowship, was akin to Heaven itself.

It was at a dinner in the house of a neighbor that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, a graceful, loving service which He gravely accepted as "for His burial." What did He mean? None of us knew—although He had plainly told us. When we began that last southward journey, He had spoken in all seriousness of His rejection and violent death in Jerusalem, but we had thought, if we thought at all, that He was merely testing our faith and loyalty. Or, perhaps, that discouragement and apprehension had momentarily overtaken His usually sanguine spirit. But even fifty years have not dimmed the fragrance of Mary's spikenard ointment as I recall this gesture of her affection.

Over the Sabbath we rested. The next day, long before dawn, Jesus had risen and gone forth without disturbing His friends. The sure sense of an impending crisis was upon Him. The more need, therefore, to spend some time in undisturbed fellowship with the Father, as we had frequently known Him to do before.

It was still early when He returned. We were all astir, almost as eager as children to complete the journey and tread once more the sacred streets of Jerusalem. Did we anticipate some-

thing unusual on this visit? Certainly we hoped; the presence of the great throngs of pilgrims for the Passover Feast might give Him the opportunity we sought for Him. This might well be The Day.

As we went, we noticed that He was quieter than was His custom, as though some grave issue confronted Him. But that would be natural, we reasoned. It is fitting that a King approach His coronation with seriousness. Our anticipation heightened. Recognized by the crowds who were camping in the olive groves by the roadside, the Master was soon the center of an excited, eager multitude, who moved along with us. Drawing near Bethphage, He turned to Peter and Andrew and told them to enter the village and borrow for His use an ass-colt which they should find tethered.

This was remarkable in itself. The Master had never sought service of this kind before. Had He not journeyed the whole way thus far on foot? What could be the meaning of this? As our cloaks were spread across the back of the unbroken but strangely docile colt, some dim memory of Zechariah's writings, learned long ago in the village school, came to mind. "Behold, thy King cometh, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

This was it!

An ass colt was a humble substitute for a royal chariot, but this was beyond question the word of the Lord! Simon Zelotes suddenly raised the exultant cry of "Hosanna!"

The effect was wonderful. A procession was spontaneously organized and the swelling throng moved toward the city, shouting in triumph,

"Hosanna! Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord! Glory in the highest!"

Our backs straightened and our heads were high as we swept through the gates of Jerusalem and drew up before the Temple. Anything could happen now. Breathlessly we awaited for Him to assert His power, to announce the coming of the Kingdom. We, the King's ministers, stood eagerly ready to take our places, and to us the hour had struck.

But, to our disappointment, nothing happened. There was some discussion with a group of pompous Pharisees who came to silence us but slunk away defeated, and then the Master quietly urged the people to go their ways. Our bewilderment and chagrin must have showed in our faces. Why had He purposely assumed the mantle of Messiahship only to cast it aside? Why had He let slip an opportunity which might never come again?

Of course, after Pentecost we knew the answers. We had, as I said, grossly misunderstood the Divine Plan and had tried to hurry the hand of God. The Kingdom was yet far future; what we had witnessed was but the earthly probation of the King. But on that spring day, as we turned toward Bethany, we were confused and hopeless, and the glory of the day had departed.

As we climbed the slopes of Olivet, no longer attended by the cheering multitudes, Jesus paused to look back. The Holy City lay peacefully in the afterglow of the setting sun. The tiny houses seemed to be nestling down for the night within the shelter of its walls. Dominating the whole was the Temple, its walls still burnished by the tints of the sky. What moving memories centered in that sacred spot! And what corruption festered beneath that gilded dome. There it stood, the visible symbol of Judah's invisible God, yet within its courts there was no place for God's own Son!

A look of inexpressible sorrow was in His face as He saw what other men could not see, the dreadful fate of the city which had opened her gates to Him while her heart remained shut. And in that solemn evening hour we saw Him, with hands outstretched toward the uncaring capital, and in anguished tones we heard Him cry,

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

There was a broken heart behind the words. Would that He might save her from herself! The dark pall of night creeping down from the surrounding hills was symbolic of the sorrows to be hers, and all so needless! And reluctantly, as though love still desired to find the smallest chance of serving and saving the object of its affection, Jesus turned away.

II

The stirring events of the following days have been told, perhaps better than I could tell them, by the great Evangelists. Matthew the publican was one of the original Twelve, and Mark and Luke were later converts to the Way.

When Jesus gave the word next morning to return to Jerusalem, our eagerness was gone, but we followed, wondering and silent. Our hopes were raised when, singlehanded, He drove the traders from the forecourt of the Temple, amid the wild applause of the common people. But again the advantage was not followed up, and the rest of the day was spent in teaching,

as if nothing unusual had happened. But still things were not the same. There seemed to be an urgency, a sense of pressure, upon Him, as though He must once more impress upon the world and especially upon us, His closest followers, all the truths which He had preached in Galilee and Judea for these three eventful years.

The parables which flowed from His lips—He loved to teach by story and parable—are still vivid in my mind. It is true that I recorded none of them in my *Life of Jesus*: perhaps I should have done so, but my brethren, Matthew and Luke, both better educated than I, had done it so well, and no one had preserved for the Church His last exhortations. In these stories was a prophetic insight of His own rejection and death at the hands of His nation. The hypocrisy of the ruling castes, the Scribes and Pharisees, was scathingly denounced, and in the plainest of terms: "Ye hypocrites—ye whited sepulchers—ye serpents—ye generation of vipers!"

Most puzzling of all was His solemn discourse, delivered privately to Peter and Andrew and my brother James and myself, on the End of the Age, the time of great, worldwide distress when He should come again. Come again? From whence, and how? we asked. He was already here, in our midst. Frankly, it was too deep for us; all our thinking was entangled with the age-old hope of immediate deliverance, the Kingdom of God here and now. He seemed to be speaking of events that were very far off. This was disturbing. Was He going away? When? Where?

As I look back, I marvel that we were so slow to understand. We should have known—we could have known—but the trouble was, we thought we *knew*. Now I realize what the Lord meant when He said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children . . ."

The Passover was approaching, and we wondered where we should celebrate the Feast. We still looked upon ourselves as pious Jews, in spite of Jesus' disregard for the technicalities of the Law; and in all our wanderings we had never failed to keep our highest solemnity, which commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt. It was growing late, and He had said nothing about it. We were on the point of asking Him, when on the afternoon of the fifth day He called Peter and me aside and told us to go into the city and prepare the Passover.

"Today?" I asked, amazed. "We have more than a full day yet; the Feast begins tomorrow evening."

"I know," He replied, "but this year it will be different. Our time is running out, and we shall eat the Passover on the Preparation Day instead. You know"—with a faint smile—"the Son of man is Lord also of the Passover, as well as the Sabbath. Go, and do as I say. When you come to the fountain by the gate, you will find a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him."

Wondering, we obeyed. It was so unusual to find a man carrying water, this being woman's work, that we had no trouble in locating our guide. The door to which he led us was strangely familiar, and suddenly it dawned on us that Jesus had made His own arrangements. The house was that of Lemuel, a wealthy disciple who had entertained us here on a previous occasion. We were not surprised, then, when our host smilingly conducted us to the best room in the house, a large, pleasant upper chamber, furnished with cushioned *triclinium* for dining, after the fashion of the Romans which many of our people had adopted. All the necessary vessels were on the table, as well as some of the traditional foods. In the courtyard below, the lamb was tethered.

Our preparations required the rest of the day. When our party arrived, all was in readiness. The secrecy with which the thing was done had ensured us privacy for this one evening when, if ever, we felt the need of it.

It was still twilight when we entered the room. Beside the door stood the brazen ewer and basin for washing away the dust of the roads from the feet. Their suggestion was plain, but for some reason none of us paid any attention to them. Not one of us offered to perform this lowly service for his brethren, or even for his Master. Our minds were too full of something else. Devotion to our King—eagerness to hear every word that flowed from His lips? Alas, no! It was the old, sad story of who should be the greatest, of who should occupy the most honorable seat at table. There was jostling and whispering in the shadows, and angry looks.

Suddenly my heart smote me. I remembered, and tears came to my mind as I remembered, the bitter lesson I had learned when I and my brother James and our mother Salome, fired with unlawful ambition, had requested the highest places in the coming Kingdom. I saw the pettiness, the childishness, the wickedness of this spirit of vanity, and in a low voice I said,

"Brothers, brothers, this is not the way for us to behave! Before honor is humility. Let us, as He once said, take the lowest place, for even that is

too good for us—carnal as we are."

Ashamed, they stood back and waited for Jesus to preside over the seating. As if nothing had happened, He took His place at the end of the three-sided couch, where there was room for three men. To my amazement, He beckoned me to His right. I could scarcely believe it. What had I done to deserve this honor? Simon Peter was at His left; and at my right, around the corner of the couch, was Judas, our treasurer and business manager, who was in charge of the serving.

This man, Judas of Kerioth, had become something of a problem to us of late. In the early days in Galilee, He was as zealous as any of us. His education and grasp of affairs had led to his being placed in charge of our slender purse. True, he had a hard time with himself, the same as the rest of us, but he was gaining. Then, for some reason, he began to turn sour. After his rude and ill-timed criticism of Mary at Simon's feast in Bethany, he had been very unpopular and had kept pretty much to himself. Still we hoped he might pull himself together and come out of it. Little did we dream of the black treachery which filled his heart on this solemn night, or of the business which he had set in motion for our destruction. Had we known, with such men as Simon Peter in our midst, he might not have been in a condition to carry out his contract with the priests.

The traditional part of the meal was nearly over, but still we had not

entered into the spirit of the Feast. Jealousy still rankled in some hearts, and envious glances shot back and forth. For myself, it is no credit to me that I was not involved this time: I was already in the place of honor. Jesus felt the tension, and before Him our hearts lay bare in all their littleness. Suddenly He arose from the couch and laid aside His robe. Girding Himself with a clean linen towel, He poured water into the brass basin and approached Peter. We were shocked into humility. He, the Lord of glory, washing our feet, a service which we had been too proud to render!

Peter, who sometimes spoke without thinking but seldom thought without speaking, blurted out the words which were in every heart:

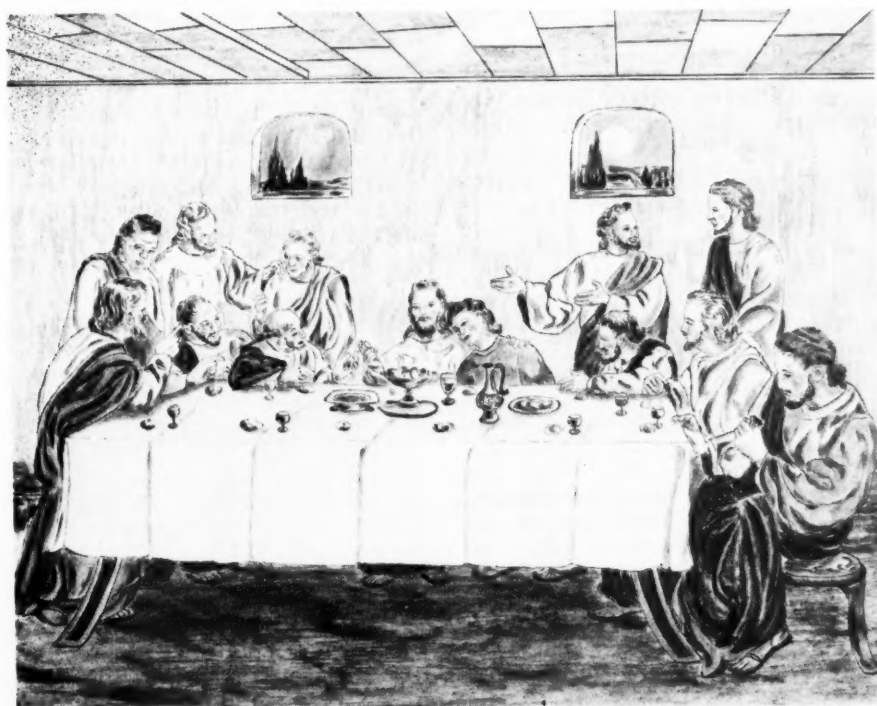
"Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet!"

But if we loved him for it, the Master did not, for He gravely replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

That was Peter!

Any one of us at that moment would have felt it the highest honor of his life to take the basin from our Lord and finish His work, but after Peter's rebuke we dared not stir. At length He came to Judas. A shudder ran through the man as Christ touched those feet which, only the day before, had gone on the blackest errand man ever took. Judas bit his lips, as if his better self were protesting; but Jesus



Jesus and the Twelve at the Last Supper

showed no sign, and with the same gracious thoroughness, He dried those feet upon the towel.

Replacing the vessels in the corner, the Master resumed His robes and His place at the table.

"Know ye what I have done unto you?" He inquired. "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord, neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Our lesson of humility was learned that night in the Upper Room, but it was not until after Pentecost that we comprehended the deeper meaning in this rite, which was the cleansing of His spiritual body, His Church. Had He not said, "And ye are clean, but not all"?

.....

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

It was like a blow in the face, and our bodies stiffened in shocked surprise. We knew there was danger from the outside world. We ourselves had often complained and distrusted His judgment; but which of us had given Him cause to doubt his personal loyalty? Or in which of us did His discerning eye detect the fatal weakness hidden even from ourselves? For it is true that men do not know themselves until tested, and then it is often too late. Simon Peter's face was ablaze. Leaning behind Jesus, he whispered soundlessly to me to ask who it was. Around the table the voices—all unnatural and strained—asked the fateful question,

"Lord, is it I?"

In answer to my whispered question, the Master indicated the traitor by presenting him a morsel of bread dipped in the sauce, as to an honored guest, with the words,

"What you have to do, do quickly."

Showing no concern, but with steps that were unsteady, the man of Keri-oth passed out into the night, and none but I knew his awful secret. To the rest, he was a messenger sent on some necessary errand; yet we all seemed to breathe easier when he was gone.

"Lord, I will never betray You!" Peter protested. "I am ready to go with You to prison and to death!"

"How little you know yourself, Peter," was the grave reply. "I tell you, before the cock-crowing, you will

three times deny that you know Me."

"I? Never!"

A murmur of agreement went around the table. We felt brave, strong, ready for any emergency. But now the Master was speaking. For an hour we sat spellbound, as His discourse flowed on, so unlike any He had spoken before. We had been reluctant to believe that He could really be taken from us, by death or otherwise; but tonight we could not escape the feeling that this was a farewell. If ever compassion were stirred for others in their need, it was there, surging in the soul of the Saviour that night, as He looked into our perplexed, saddened faces, and deeper, into our very souls.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

These were not the words of One who went in fear of His life, and yesterday it would have been hard to adjust them to the idea of His martyrdom; but on the mountain top to which He had lifted us tonight, nothing seemed strange.

His prayer was ended, and the concluding part of the familiar Hallel was sung, and we followed Him down the dark stairs and across the courtyard. At the threshold He paused. He had caught sight of a figure in the shadows. It was the goodman of the house, whose gracious hospitality we had enjoyed; and the Master would not leave without a word of farewell and grateful appreciation. The night was still. Now and then the distant bark of a dog rent the silence, and a few lights showed at the casements. And we walked in silence between the close-set houses, through the little gate which was never locked, and out towards Olivet.

III

Gethsemane was a pattern of black and silver in the path of the glowing moonlight as we entered, and Jesus went forward, alone, to meet His God, to pray in agony of spirit:

"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done!"

That is all we three heard—Peter, James, and I, who had been chosen to go deeper into the cypresses with Him as His personal attendants. For shame fills my heart to this day as I remember that we failed our Lord in His hour of need. With none but us to depend on, He found us asleep! Even with the sense of impending crisis

heavy over our heads, we slept. Why, I do not know. Fifty years have not quenched the pain which pierced my heart when I awoke to His sorrowful words,

"What? could ye not watch with me one hour?"

Though He spoke to Peter, I was equally condemned, for I was no less guilty. Such tests come rarely in this life—and we had failed, miserably.

The trap was sprung. From the bushes poured armed men, and we were surrounded. In the flare of the torches, I was not surprised to see Judas at their head. I saw Peter draw his short sword, and I closed my eyes, even while secretly thinking that the traitor deserved no better fate. Yet I did not want to see blood on Peter's hands, and I was glad when his blow only did minor damage to a servant's ear, and Jesus sternly rebuked him for answering violence with violence. The Temple guards stepped forward and bound our Master's hands—those hands which had healed the sick and lame and blind, those hands which had fed the hungering multitudes, those hands which had so recently been stretched out in sorrow for Jerusalem's apostasy.

And we? May God forgive us—we, world conquerors by our own admission, ran for our lives, I with the rest. It was every man for himself. Fifty steps away, something happened to me. Ahead lay safety, but my heart refused it. I loved my Lord so very much, and now I was showing that love by abandoning Him to His enemies. I recalled the words of Thomas Didymus, before our fatal journey began, "Let us go with Him, that we may die with Him." Surely I could do no less. I turned back to the smoking torches, to the excited, jostling rabble which was already moving in triumph toward the city. Suddenly I was aware that I was not alone. Simon Peter walked beside me. I was relieved to see that his sword was gone; to be found armed now would be bad.

At first we tried to avoid the moon-path as we followed, but as the shrubbery gave way to bare terrain we walked boldly up with the rear of the column, reasoning that thus we would be less conspicuous. As we passed through the gate, the tribune commanding the detachment of garrison troops gave the command for strict silence, that the sleeping city be not aroused. A few streets farther and he and his men, their duty done, returned to the castle, while the rest of the sinister procession continued to the palace which housed two of the most despicable characters this world has ever known—Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests of the Jews.

Was it a sin for me to wish my Lord and Master to be wrong? For I have done that very thing, on two occasions. When at Cæsarea Philippi He told us of His impending death at Jerusalem, I did not dispute as Peter did, but in my heart I hoped with all that was in me that it might not be so. And on this sad, short journey from Gethsemane to Jerusalem, my mind was filled with an agonized confusion of thoughts, but ever recurring was the Master's warning to Peter, my companion and friend. I had hoped and prayed that there might be a condition, a way out, so that Peter might not really deny His Lord. I loved Peter, for the man he was most of the time and for the man he was trying to be all the time. And, forsooth, his quickness of speech had saved me from many a rebuke; it was through his blunders that the rest of us learned many a lesson.

The portress at the high priest's door turned out to be a Bethsaida girl, Zillah the daughter of Reuben, a fellow-fisherman. She raised an eyebrow, but passed me through with a casual word of greeting. As I went from the courtyard into the house of Annas with the rest, I looked around for my companion, but he was not there. Zillah must have shut the door in his face, as a stranger; so I returned and persuaded her to admit him. But once in the hall, he was again missing. Fearing to enter, he had stopped with a group of servants who had gathered about a small fire. But now Annas was speaking, and I could no longer wait for Peter.

What I saw that night sickened me, as it would have sickened any decent man, but there was nothing—nothing I could do for my blessed Master. He had said He was not alone, and that the Father could easily send ten legions of angels to protect Him; perhaps at the right moment the miracle would take place. The whole proceeding was illegal—I knew enough Jewish law to know that, but Annas was not the man to stand on legality. The crafty old reprobate had no official standing whatever; he had been removed from office by Valerius Gratus, but he managed to keep the title in his family for many years. As president of the Sanhedrin he was the real power behind the priestly throne, and he had no scruples as to how he exercised that power. To this day the Jews execrate his memory; would that they had execrated him on that Preparation Day so long ago.

Failing to secure any damaging admission by his questions, Annas had his Prisoner put in chains and sent to the adjoining house of his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest

in name. There an emergency session of the Sanhedrin was forming, also illegally. As the Master was led away, I walked where He would see me, and once my eyes met His, and He smiled in recognition. To know He was not alone in this hour must have comforted Him, and for me it was enough to be near Him.

In the courtyard I heard Peter's voice, high-pitched, unnatural. By the light of the cressets I saw his face, distorted, and with a great fear in his eyes. Oaths and curses, forgotten since the old fishing days, were pouring from his lips. I was aghast. Surely this could not be Simon Peter, the rock!*

"I tell you, I know not the man!"

So it was true. The Lord had really known Peter far better than he knew himself. Why, oh, why, had he not remembered the warning and so avoided the trap into which he fell? His failure was indeed a wretched thing, but who is there of us who cannot with profit search his own soul and give thanks that he was not so tempted? At least, let it be said that he followed thus far, which is more than nine of our number dared to do.

The servants nudged one another and laughed; this was good sport. Suddenly from the walls of Antonia came the sound of the trumpet which changed the watch between midnight and morning—the "cock-crowing," we always called it. Peter raised his head and swung around. He remembered. At that moment his eyes met the sorrowful gaze of the Master, who was being led through the cloister. Muffling his face in his cloak, Peter stumbled out into the vestibule, weeping bitterly but ineffectually.

Ineffectually? No; those hot tears

of broken-hearted penitence were the cement which began in that dreadful hour to harden the quicksand which he had become, back into the rock.

Of the Master's mock trial before the Council, and the shocking cruelty which followed, you have been told. Through it all I stood in an obscure corner of the great hall, where I could see Him, although sometimes I could not bear to look. Also you have heard how Pontius Pilate, the Procurator, began by standing nobly for justice, then wavered, and finally disintegrated under the pressure of the mob, their frenzy whipped up by the Jewish priests. I am a Jew, the son of a Jew; but on that day I was thoroughly ashamed of my Jewishness. And if all Romans are like Pilate, I should blush to be a Roman, too.

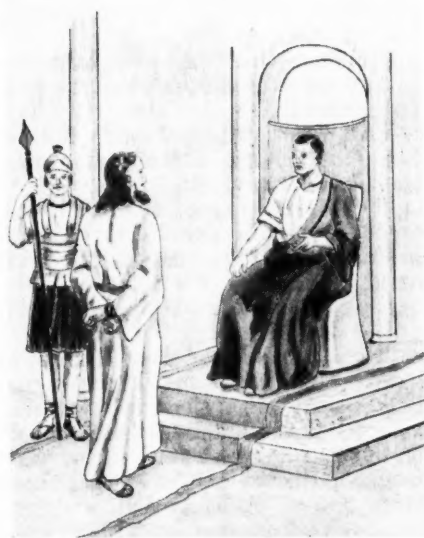
I followed the rabble to the judgment hall of Antonia. Where was James? Where was my mother? Had Mary heard of the arrest? So many questions needed answering, but I could not leave my Lord now. He saw me again as He was led through the street, and again He smiled. Whatever happened to me now, I must see it through.

Pilate's first verdict was a clear acquittal: "I find no fault in this man."

Sweeter words I had never heard; hope burned anew in my heart. Rome was to bestow the justice which Israel denied us. But Pilate was not man enough to make his verdict stand. Overawed by the bloodthirsty threats of the mob, he went from good to bad and from bad to worse, until wearily he pronounced the sentence which will live in infamy: "Take ye him and crucify him."

Calling for water, he washed his hands before the multitude. And though he knew the words were false even as he uttered them, he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. See ye to it." The cup of wrath was passed to Jerusalem, and the apostate city accepted it with clear eyes, even eagerly. "His blood be on us, and on our children!"

Have you ever seen a man scourged? Then pray that you may never see it. The Romans have a saying that if the scourging is properly done, there is nothing left to crucify. But since the rabble were bent on witnessing a



Jesus before Pilate

* Not *Petra*, the mighty Rock of truth upon which the Church is built (Matthew 16:18), but *petros*, a stone, or piece of rock. The play on the two words in this passage emphasizes the distinction between them. Peter was given no primacy, but became a part of the great Rock, or foundation, which consists of the teachings of the "apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20).

crucifixion, the Master's tormentors took care that He did not die under the lash. As He was led, drooping and bloody, into the barrack-hall, where more brutal indignities awaited Him, I hurried to our lodgings to break the news to the women who had come with us from Galilee. Mary Magdalene was there, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and Joanna, who lived in Jerusalem; also my mother, and the Master's own mother. Of my brother James there had been no word.

We had hoped to soften the blow for His mother, but she saw us whispering together and demanded an explanation. She received it like the noblewoman she was, and immediately called for her cloak and sandals. We expostulated, reasoned, protested, commanded. She was no longer young, and she would see what it was not good for a man to see, much less a frail woman. The mob was menacing, and she might be subjected to indignity or violence. But our words were wasted. Her Son was being crucified, and her place was at His side, if she could at all reach it. She was the first to leave the house, and we had no choice but to follow.

The death march was in motion when we sighted the grim bulk of the castle at the end of the street. The parapets of the houses were black with spectators, some morbidly curious, some wailing in sympathy, some grimly silent. The lower element were venting their innate savagery in mocking curses. Outside the walls the mob became rougher, and stones and clods of earth were hurled at the prisoners. Prisoners—for with the stainless Messiah walked two robbers, scowling, vicious men bent beneath their crosses, pitiable in their battered and bloody helplessness in spite of their low character. But there was little pity in the multitude, the dregs of Jerusalem, which howled on the flanks of the procession. They had come to see men suffer, the more keenly the better.

We were mostly unrecognized, the women being veiled, but there were some who suspected, and we were jostled, insulted and spat upon. Why—why had we not *compelled* Mary—by force, if necessary—to stay away from this scene?

A little way outside the walls there was a pause. Jesus had fallen under the weight of His cross. I was not surprised, for He had been without sleep for two days and a night, and without food since early the evening before. And it was probably little enough water His brutal guards had allowed Him. Had it not been for my precious charges, I would have pushed through that roaring, scream-

ing crowd, even at the risk of my life, and lifted the weight from His blessed shoulders. But the delay was short; a swarthy stranger, Simon the Cyrenian, who afterward became one of us, was seized and impressed for the service.

At last, Golgotha! We dared not go too near the dread circle of spearheads, and I urged the women not to look as the cruel work began. Though I put my hands to my ears, the dull blows of the hammer, driving home the awful nails, could be heard. Why must men thus behave toward their fellowmen? God in heaven! is there no mercy left in this world—a world grown old and tired and corrupt and ready for the fate of Sodom?

Our personal disappointment that our hopes had failed was overshadowed and dwarfed by our personal grief that our Friend was suffering. The Kingdom could wait; our concern now was for our King. Would not—might not the miracle yet come? So long as there was life, there was hope.

The crosses were upreared in the holes dug for them, the ground being pressed firmly about the base of each, and the work of the soldiers had come to an end. Only a quaternion for each cross now remained under the command of a centurion to see that, on the part of the victims' friends, no attempt was made at rescue; on the part of their foes, that their jests and taunts did not lead to rioting. The soldiers made themselves comfortable on the ground—it would be a long time until evening—and began to throw dice for the pitiful possessions of the condemned men. It was high noon.

We had pressed as far forward as we dared, and the lamentations which the women could not restrain were drawing attention. The centurion walked over to us.

"Who are you?" he asked, brusquely but not unkindly. "What are you doing here?"

This was my test. Peter's failure had fortified me. I found it easier than I had expected.

"I am a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. I loved Him well. This woman is His mother. Who has a better right here?"

His face softened a trifle, I thought, and so did his tone.

"No one, lad, no one. I have a mother, too . . . somewhere. It has been a long time since I have seen her. All of you stand up here, where my men can protect you. I'll see that no one harms you . . ." His voice sank lower and he glanced over his shoulder. "Between ourselves, I don't like this thing at all. I have a feeling that

there has been a horrible miscarriage of justice—but what can I do? I am a soldier."

The minutes and the hours dragged painfully by. The sun beat down cruelly on the suffering men, who no longer writhed but drooped in exhaustion. Even the mob was wearying of its ghastly sport. And still the miracle did not come! It all seemed like a terrible dream, from which we must surely awake and find ourselves by the cool waters of Galilee. Such things as these simply could not be—and yet they were.

Suddenly we were aware that it was growing dark. The sun had ceased to shine, and the rumble of distant thunder in the surrounding hills betokened an approaching storm. But this was no ordinary storm. The darkness grew denser and more appalling, as though Nature could not look upon the tragedy being enacted. The crowd, now silent and apprehensive, began to edge away.

I was not sure that the Lord was aware of our presence, but suddenly He lifted His head and called my name in a clear voice. The officer nodded permission, and we approached the foot of the cross. I supported His mother, now past tears, on one side, and my mother Salome was on the other. In the gloom we saw Him look down tenderly, His own pain forgotten in feeling for our sorrow and our future.

"Woman, behold thy son," He said, gently. Then to me, He added, "Behold thy mother."



Jesus' mother in John's care

My senses reeled for an instant. I—I, the fisherman of Bethsaida, to be the adopted son of the mother of the Lord of glory! I, to take the place of His own brothers and sisters who were safe in Capernaum, unbelieving in Him, more than half ashamed of Him, unaware of what was done to Him! True, I had followed Him to the end, but He was my Friend, and He had never forsaken me; why should I abandon Him? All I had done for Him seemed so very, very little—in fact, I could think of nothing to my own credit—and what He had done for me was so much. And now, this honor! It was too great to be true.

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"My God, my God, how great is my deliverance!"

Strange words, these, from the parched and swollen lips of a crucified Man. The miracle? After all, He still lived, and His Father was all-powerful. Three figures silently joined our group, and I felt a familiar arm around my shoulders. It was my brother James and Matthew the publican and Simon Zelotes, who had ventured to come to this hill of horror. I hoped the Master would see them, too, but He gave no sign. What did those mysterious words, uttered in so grateful a tone, mean? We were soon to learn, although even then we did not immediately understand.

When we came to know, we realized that it was indeed a miracle—a miracle of mercy. He was assured that His Father in heaven had not abandoned Him to weary days of suffering and slow death; His response to this supreme test of His obedience was to be rewarded with a speedy release. In that moment He felt the approach of merciful death, and His heart welled up in thankfulness. "How great is My deliverance!"

"I thirst!"

One of the soldiers, a rough fellow but kind-hearted, fixed a sponge on a stick, poured wine on it and lifted it to moisten the lips of the dying Saviour. May he find some reward for this act of mercy! Then the sacred face seemed to be flooded with light for a moment, as in tones ringing with triumph, Christ exclaimed,

"It is finished! Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!"

His head fell on His breast, and He moved no more. One of the soldiers shook Him roughly, then prodded Him with the point of his spear, but there was no response. Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, was dead. And with Him died the hope which had sustained and united us

through three years of sun and storm. Our world had ended.

Then all the furies of Nature were unleashed. Thunder rolled across the black sky and crashed in the hills, although there was no rain. The lightning drew its flaming sword and clove the dark-hung heavens with its blade. The earth rocked under our feet. And, panic-stricken, the last spectators of that colossal tragedy fled from the scene, all except our little group and the guards. The centurion spoke at last, his voice unsteady:

"Truly, this was the Son of God!"

I never saw him again after that fateful day, but I have often wondered what became of this Roman. Never have I ceased to hope that in some distant part of the world, somehow, he might have found the true God and the risen Christ.

Evening came, and with it the calm after the tempest. We had vainly tried to persuade the grief-stricken Mother to return to the city, but like Rizpah of our Sacred Writings, she seemed bent on remaining to watch by her beloved dead. The sun was dropping toward the western mountains when we saw a party of strangers approaching. I recognized them as two members of the Sanhedrin and some servants. Joseph, a rich man of Arimathæa, and the rabbi Nicodemus, both secret admirers of Jesus, had come to render in death the homage they dared not give in life. They showed an order signed by Pilate for delivery of the body of Jesus for burial; the servants carried with them water for washing the body, clean linen cloths for the shroud, and a hundred pounds of costly spices.

At the centurion's order, the soldiers assisted in taking the precious body down from the cross, their gentleness showing that they were not entirely devoid of feeling, callous as they seemed before.

It was a funeral worthy of a King, although His mourners were few in number. As we rolled the great stone against the mouth of Joseph's rock-hewn sepulcher, the old Rabbi chanted the traditional prayers. Hardly had we finished when a band of Temple guards, bearing an official permit, arrived and affixed the high priest's seal to the tomb. Then, with breaking hearts, we left Christ in their keeping.

IV

Jerusalem was quiet all through the Passover Day. Before night all—or nearly all—the Twelve had drifted back to the house of Lemuel. Why, or how, we had no clear idea. I know now that it was God's leading, but at the same time it just seemed the

only place to go in this dark hour. Scattered as we were, we sorely needed each other's companionship and support; and this was our only rendezvous in Jerusalem. Our family lodging was overcrowded now, and another shelter for me seemed best. One by one and two by two we found our way to that hospitable Upper Room, still at our disposal and now furnished with sleeping mats for all of us.

Perhaps nowhere in Judea could have been found eleven more dejected and thoroughly demoralized men than we were. Eleven—for Judas, they told me, was dead, by his own hand. Remorse had come too late. It was a day of long and heavy silences, punctuated by the sighs which come from a broken heart, and by unashamed weeping. We were too numb from shock, too paralyzed by grief and apprehension, to face up to the situation with clear minds.

I was better off than most, for I had the responsibility of caring for the Master's mother, which gave me something to live for. But how to convey her safely from the hostile city to the quiet of Galilee was the immediate problem. In fact, in all of our minds, dazed as we were, the one compelling, unspoken idea was to get away. On the sabbath, of course, we could do nothing; but I think we all planned to escape the next day.

Peter's eyes were red with weeping, but he seemed to be a changed man. The old, blustering self-confidence was gone, and he was much more the rock. After an agonized and repentant confession of his sin before us all, he said little, but thought much. Thomas Didymus sat for hours, vacantly staring at the wall, until we feared for his sanity. He had been deeply attached to the Master, and while inclined to look on the dark side of things, no man followed more loyally or hoped more fervently for the redemption of Israel. Now his grief and disappointment were almost more than he could bear.

The day wore to an end, as all days must do, and we slept, fitfully. We were just beginning to stir as the morning sun came over the mountain and the careless birds were singing, when suddenly there was an insistent pounding at the door. We stiffened with alarm. Had our hiding place been betrayed to the priests? Were we to share the fate of our Master? Philip looked out of the window and whispered that it might be possible, if perilous, to drop to the alley and run. The knocking continued, and a hand tried the latch. Then a wave of relief swept over us as we heard a familiar voice.

"It is I—Mary Magdalene! I must speak to Peter!"

The door was flung open so suddenly that she almost fell into the room. Her hair was dishevelled, and her breath came in gasps.

"What does this mean?" cried Peter, almost harshly. "How knew ye where we lay? Have the Elders also learned of this place?"

"John told us," she panted, "where he might be found if Jesus' mother should need him. But I have come with strange tidings. This morning I went early to the sepulcher—"

"You? Alone?"

"No—there were others—Salome, Joanna—no one molested us. I had not slept, and I felt I must see once more the place where they laid my Master. But when I came to the place, the guards were gone, and the stone was rolled back."

"Rolled back? Who did it?"

"I do not know. I—"

"Where was the Lord's body?"

"It was *gone*! I looked in and saw that the tomb was empty, except for the linen clothes. There was no man in sight. Then I ran for the city; the others are following. Where have they laid Him? Oh, what shall we do?"

There was a babble of excited questions, but Peter had heard enough, and so had I. I grasped his arm just as he grasped mine, and at the risk of our bones we leaped down the stone stairway three steps at a time. Through the silent streets and the great gate we sped, and straight to the garden tomb; hope, not fear, lent wings to our feet.

The great stone was rolled back, just as Mary had said, and the place was silent and deserted. I stood at the entrance and peered into the gloom, but could see nothing. Why I hesitated to enter I shall never know. I felt the need of Peter, but I had outrun him. As in Gethsemane, it had been every man for himself. In a moment he came through the trees, out of breath but still running. I read the question in his eyes and shook my head. Without hesitation he plunged down the few steps into the cave. I followed. As our eyes became accustomed to the darkness we saw that the tomb was indeed empty. The grave-clothes, still redolent of spices, lay in a heap, and the head-band was neatly folded and laid on a ledge. Peter looked at me, and I at him.

"What do you think, John?" he asked.

And then it dawned on me that this was indeed the Lord's hour of victory. I remembered the occasions when He had told us He should rise the third day—sayings which we did not understand or even wish to hear. All my doubts seemed to sink away and I was left standing on the mountain top of faith with my risen Lord. Even though I should never see Him, I would believe.

"I do not think," I replied, "I know. I know our Lord is risen."

"And I," said Simon Peter, soberly. "I, too, believe with all my heart. Why did we ever doubt? Let us go and tell our brethren."

As we returned, we met Mary Magdalene near the gate. She was going back to the tomb, she said, in the hope of seeing the Lord, or at least finding out what had become of Him. We advised her not to go alone, for her own safety, but she did not wait to hear us out. Like a frightened deer, she was gone.

We were telling our story for the fourth or fifth time, when the entire party of women came to our door. Peter and I had missed them in the city by one street, we learned later. Their faces were radiant, and their news was almost beyond belief for many of our number. Mary Magdalene had come to the tomb on her second visit, and looking inside had seen two angels keeping watch where the Lord had lain. Distrusting her own eyes, bewildered and in tears, she had turned about, only to look into the face of the Master Himself! She had spoken to Him, and He to her. There was no mistake.

When the women had departed, there was much discussion. Some

were frankly skeptical, and not to be won over by Peter's faith and mine. Why had not the Lord appeared to us, his closest friends and disciples? Was it all the imagination of a few overwrought women? We were all nearly beside ourselves; small wonder if they to whom He meant so much should become completely unstrung. But still—there was the witness of the empty tomb, which we had seen for ourselves.

That evening, when we were at supper, the door opened quietly, and a figure advanced through the shadows into the uncertain light of the flickering lamps. Simon Peter leaped up with a great cry of joy, and instantly we were all on our feet, the food forgotten.

It was the Lord!

The wounds in His hands and His feet made it certain, even though we needed no such evidence. He was with us again, as in the great days! Death had lost its sting, the grave its victory. Life—for all of us—was beginning again.

V

I am an old man now. I have seen much, and suffered much for His sake, yet I count my sufferings—the exile in dreary Patmos, the scourgings and imprisonments, the stonings and scoffings, as the highest honors. I have seen His church grow from a handful of disheartened men and women to a world-wide body of believers, thanks largely to the work of our beloved brother Paul, who took the apostleship of Judas. Such a missionary never before graced the earth, nor since.

I have seen that Church survive the persecutions of Saul and Herod and Nero, and come out the stronger.

And I have seen the blood of the Just One terribly required of the generation which crucified Him, as Jerusalem and her glorious Temple were reduced to a ghastly ruin by the armies of Rome.

And now they are all gone, those companions of the beginning—Peter and James and Philip and Matthew, Simon Zelotes and Andrew and Nathanael, Thomas and Paul, and all the rest. And I still live.

I have seen my Lord and walked beside Him in the day of His probation; I have been with Him in His humiliation and rejection; I have seen Him in the flesh—more than

(Continued on page 26)



John and Peter running to the sepulcher



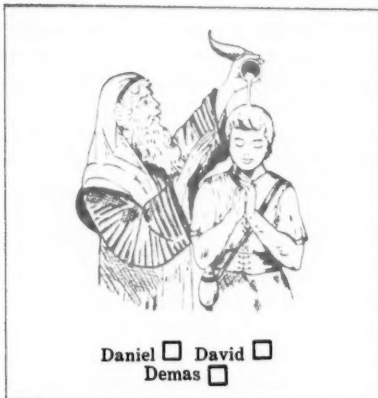
Children's Page



PICTURE QUIZ

In whose day did the scenes pictured below take place?

Put an X in the square which indicates your choice. Then turn to page 11 to check your answer.



SUSAN WAS BRAVE

Susan liked being busy. She liked helping people. Susan was staying with Aunt Ethel while mother went shopping.

Aunt Ethel let Susan dust and polish the furniture. She knew Susan was a careful little worker. This made Susan very happy. She put on her red and white apron and Aunt Ethel helped her tie the bow in back.

Susan knew where the dust cloth and polish were kept. She ran and got them, and went right to work, humming a little tune.

Susan polished the chest of drawers on which Aunt Ethel kept a pretty vase. Susan liked the vase very much. She picked it up carefully with both hands, but something terrible happened! The vase slipped from her fingers and fell with a thud on the soft rug. Susan quickly picked it up; it hadn't broken, but it was cracked. Susan was frightened. She wondered what she should do. First she thought of putting it back and turning it so the crack wouldn't show. But then she thought, No! that would not be right. I must tell Auntie what I did.



Susan walked slowly toward the kitchen with the vase. "Aunt Ethel," she said, feeling very much like crying, "I—I—didn't mean to—but I cracked your pretty vase."

Aunt Ethel looked a little stern for just a moment. Then she smiled. "Don't worry, Susan," she said. "It's only cracked and I can still use it for long-stemmed flowers. Accidents will happen sometimes, no matter how careful we try to be. You were a very honest little girl to come and tell me about it. Here! sit up on this stool and we shall both have a glass of milk and a cookie."

Susan climbed up on the stool. She didn't feel like crying any more; she felt very happy. "If I always have courage to tell the truth, will I always be happy, Aunt Ethel?"

Now what do you suppose Aunt Ethel's answer was? You think she said, "Yes, little niece." Well you are just right, for that is what she said.

SHEPHERDS

In the mountains of Judea there were only a few open meadows where sheep were safe. The shepherd sought the best pastures which were found away back in the recesses of some winding ravine on a bordering grassy slope. He carefully led his sheep over the dangerous mountain paths until they reached the good green grass. He led them to still waters, where they could drink without danger of falling into the swift current. Sometimes they rested in the shade of trees or rocks. While they rested, he watched, meanwhile playing simple music on his pipe.

The night Jesus was born must have been a lovely spring night, because the shepherds were out in the open fields with their flocks. Bright angels appeared in the sky to tell them about Jesus' birth. The angels sang a beautiful song to the shepherds, one that, I am sure, they never forgot.

Shepherds were usually poor people. They had no wealth except their sheep. When they wanted to buy something, they paid for it with a sheep from their flock. Yet it was to those poor shepherds and not to rich people that the angels came to tell of Jesus' birth.

This shows God will love us even if we don't have much money or many things that other people have, just so long as we are good.

So let's be good. I am going to try. Won't you?



Meditations

On the Word

"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4: 18).

In the Scriptures, the authority of the Eternal and the system of laws which directs the lives of His people, are figuratively referred to as "Jerusalem."

In Galatians 4 Paul speaks of the two covenants, the one taking its authority from the Mosaic or Ten Commandment Law given on Mt. Sinai (then obsolete), and the law of Faith which alone could bring eternal life and freedom from the bondage of mortality. The two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, one by a bondwoman and the other by a free woman by promise, are used allegorically to typify these two covenants. Jerusalem, once the seat of God's temporal kingdom on earth, was now, with her children, in bondage both literally and spiritually. But Jerusalem from above, typifying the Authority of God's future arrangement of things on this earth, is free, and the Mother of us all.

Primarily, divine authority is said to come from heaven. "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." "Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven" (Ps. 57: 3; 76: 8).

At best, human life upon earth has been one long period of bondage to fear, hate, turmoil, revenge, to merciless individuals, to tyrannical overlords; to say nothing of the bondage to evil propensities of human nature. Primitive man had to make his way through life in fear of vicious animals, starvation, violent death from his hostile neighbors. As living conditions improved with civilization and man's temporal possessions increased, other fears, such as economic insecurity, political upheavals, devastating wars, replaced the more ancient concerns. And despite the progress, so-called, of the twentieth century, many of these fears still plague us. And while man has to a great extent conquered the forces of nature—or at least learned to control them—he has not conquered himself. His civilization is largely a veneer.

By accepting divine Authority, the Word of God, to act as a ruling force in our lives, we no longer are in bondage to our inherent moral defects. Wrath, malice, pride, jealousy, deceit, stubbornness, are among these traits under which we were held in bondage until freed by accepting the surveillance of the Word of God, and amending our lives. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," said Jesus (John 8: 32).

No freedom in life equals the bliss of becoming free from ourselves. Compare the worth of the moral strength that makes it possible for us to sit down and calmly talk over our differences with one who strongly opposes us or has done us a wrong, with the natural trend to let our tempers go, talk back, and make wild and groundless statements to our opponent. Is it not a release to be able to conquer our pride so that the possession of wealth, temporal power or authority over others will not puff

us up or lead us to think too highly of ourselves? If enjoying the moral freedom of the sons of God we can even be told of our own faults and shortcomings and take it with good grace and profit by it. In Isaiah 42: 7 the Prophet alludes to this bondage to self as being in prison: "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

But desirable as is the possession of these freedoms just enumerated, they are not the only freedoms the "Jerusalem from above" has to bestow. They are but a means to a much greater end. The freedom from pain, disease, old age and otherwise inescapable death, is what we long for. And we are not left to doubt that the "Jerusalem from above" can and will bring us these things. We have the assurance from the Revelator that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21: 4).

In II Cor. 5: 2 Paul speaks of this change from mortality to immortality as being "clothed upon with our house . . . from heaven." "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." We do not want to be unclothed: we want the moral change, the release from sin, from the smallness and pettiness of our carnal nature—and if sincere we will be working daily to get that change; but above all we desire the physical change. We "groan" or yearn earnestly to be clothed upon with our house from heaven, with immortality, "that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

In our memory verse this glorious freedom, and the exalted authority that has led up to and will ultimately bring it, is affectionately referred to as "Mother." The child has implicit faith in its mother. It looks to her for its every need; it looks to her as a shield and protector; it clings close to her when in danger, as when crossing a busy street in traffic. A good mother is all these things to her child, and more, for she wisely trains and guides her child during its formative years and becomes its trusted adviser after adolescence.

This "Mother" or "Jerusalem from above," does all these things for us, and much more, both now and in the future. She is eternal in her duration. In Dr. Moffatt's translation of Psalm 87 this "Mother," and the important role she will play in filling the earth with God's glory, is beautifully described: "The Eternal founded her upon the sacred hills; ay, Sion and her gates are more to him than any dwelling in the land. Dear city of God, he utters thy glories: . . . 'Sion!—her name shall be Mother, for every follower of mine belongs to her by birth.' The Eternal writes of every nation, in his census, 'This follower of mine was born in it'; but, prince or people, everyone has his home in thee, O Sion."

"Prince," the multitudinous Christ composed of Christ the Head and the Church His body; and "people," the great unrevealed number to be taken out as subjects of the Kingdom during the grand Millennial reign to fill this earth with God's glory, will all be the spiritual offspring of this one glorious "Mother."

A New Discovery Abroad

IT WAS NIGHT on the Atlantic Ocean. The sky was clear, but the air was cold and windy. Therefore the decks of the luxury liner were abandoned except for a few sailors going about their duties. Some of the passengers had retired to their state-rooms, but the greater number were attracted to the lights and the glamour of the ballroom, where a festive spirit prevailed, with the music of an orchestra floating above the sounds of chatter, laughter, tinkling of dishes, and shuffling of feet. In the main lounge, little groups—mostly elderly people—relaxed.

"Let us go up on deck and look at the stars. I think the sea at night is beautiful, and this is our last night on the ocean," said Hazel Forward, addressing her husband.

"Good idea! A little fresh air is just what I need," answered her husband cheerily, as he picked up their coats. "The constant whirl that this modern generation calls 'pleasure' certainly is everywhere evident on these steamships. It does seem strange that people on their vacations like to spend their time just the way they live every day at home. They would get more out of life if they would try taking a vacation from themselves just once."

"I often wonder about ourselves, Edwin," answered his wife, thoughtfully. "While it is true that we have always tried to be honest; we do not drink, or smoke; we contribute to charity and we brought up our children to be respectable citizens; yet sometimes I feel our religious lives are thin and empty. We are growing old, and we just haven't any definite aim."

"I know one thing," replied Mr. Forward, as they ascended the last flight of stairs leading to the upper deck, "our long anticipated round-the-world trip is now about over. Two months—my! but how fast they have slipped by! And Colorado, good old Denver, and then home will be the sweetest place I have seen yet! This earth has some beautiful spots, but there is no place like home!"

On deck, the wind tugged at their coats, but the cool air felt good after the stuffiness below.

"Just look at the heavens! How much the people downstairs are missing!" exclaimed Mrs. Forward, as she gazed upward at the simple splendor. "It is almost time for the new moon, isn't it?" she reflected. "How delightful it will be to have springtime greet us on our return home!"

"Your mention of spring reminds me," Mr. Forward replied, supporting himself against a gust of wind, "I met a most interesting man this afternoon, a missionary from Rochester, N. Y. He is on his way home now to attend a Christmas celebration. He tells me his church keeps Christmas in the spring."

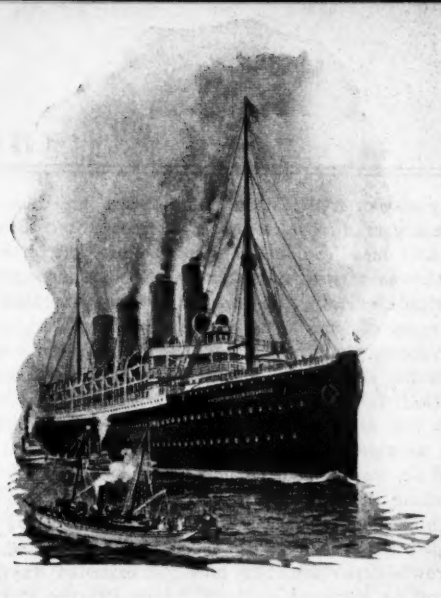
"Christmas celebration . . . in the spring!" exclaimed Hazel in astonishment. "He is a little late, is he not? I thought everyone in America celebrated Christmas on December 25."

"Apparently his church is an exception, Hazel. He tells me this religious organization to which he belongs do not celebrate Christmas on December 25, but that they are going to celebrate it on the 12th of April this year. I do not remember now all the evidence he gave in support of his theory, but he was pretty convincing."

"Of all things," his wife mused, "here we've been nearly all the way around the world seeking the unusual; and then on our return trip—almost home, as it were—we learn about the strangest of things right in our own United States! What did he tell you about this springtime Christmas, Edwin? Surely you remember something he said."

"Oh, yes, but let us go down below. It's too cool to stay out here any longer."

March 31, 1956



THEY were just comfortably seated in a quiet corner of the lounge, when they were joined by the Reverend McVitty and his wife, with whom they had become acquainted during their homeward voyage.

The conversation started out with trivial talk, but Mrs. Forward was deeply interested in this springtime Christmas, so she asked her husband to recount for them his afternoon's experience.

While Mr. Forward described his encounter with the missionary, the Reverend McVitty listened tolerantly. When Mr. Forward had finished, he cleared his throat, balanced his fingers together thoughtfully, and delivered his opinion: "There are faddists of all types who delight in being different. They seek publicity by being radical and ridiculous. Someone will always be claiming to have discovered something new, and a few—those who are always looking for something new [there was just a hint of warning in his voice]—will swallow it. But the world will still go on its merry way. Anyone who thinks he can convert the world to a green Christmas is wasting his time."

"Why, ever since I was a child, a white Christmas has been one of the dearest things to my heart. And the Christmas spirit is wonderful, don't you think?" ventured the timid, little Mrs. McVitty.

"All you say may be true," commented Mr. Forward, seriously, "but the celebration is not like it used to be when I was a boy. I remember when it was a devotional service, a home festival; but now-a-days it is a festival for the department stores. Once it was dressed in swaddling clothes; now it is wrapped in cellophane. Once it was shepherds on a star-canopied hilltop; now it is elbowing masses of grim-faced shoppers. Once it was a heavenly multitude chanting 'Peace'; now it is a very human multitude with sore feet and thin tempers. Once it was the story of the Christ Child; but now it is the story of Santa and red-nosed reindeer."

"Pardon me if I interrupt, folks?" A pleasant, middle-aged gentleman stood before them.

Mr. Forward sprang to his feet, introducing to the group Mr. Planter, the missionary whom he had met during the afternoon. The Reverend McVitty glanced with inward uneasiness toward the small Bible Mr. Planter was carrying. Well he knew that, should a discussion develop, the evidence was against the December 25 observance; and he, as a minister of the Gospel, would be in a bad spot attempting to defend a time-honored festival with an unsavory history. The fact that he might listen and learn something himself from this missionary, as had Mr. Forward, never occurred to him. That would be manifestly beneath his dignity as a clergyman. And the Reverend McVitty was a clergyman of dignity! He wondered if Mr. Planter had overheard what he had just said in regard to faddists.

AS soon as the missionary had been introduced and seated, Mrs. Forward, with her characteristic eagerness, plunged right into the subject. "Please tell us, Mr. Planter, why it matters when we celebrate Christmas."

By way of reply, Mr. Planter opened his Bible, saying, "Let us turn and read what it says in Romans 13: 7, 'Render therefore to all their dues . . . honor to whom honor.' The birth of Jesus Christ, which was of such importance as to be announced by a Heavenly multitude, certainly deserves to be commemorated on the true anniversary of such an auspicious event.

"Now we shall read Deut. 16: 1," Mr. Planter continued: "'Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.' You see," said Mr. Planter, "it tells us plainly the month we are to observe."

"Wait, wait, just a moment, please," said Mrs. Forward, vainly searching in her purse for a pencil and paper. The notebook in which she had been keeping the memoirs of their experiences was in their stateroom, packed away with their baggage against tomorrow's departure. She had not expected anything of further interest to occur, at least until they left the steamship.

Her husband smiled a little at this, his wife's idiosyncrasy—she was always taking notes. He had watched her stand scribbling in a hundred quaint city streets, castles, cathedrals, parks, museums, waterfronts, and factories the world over. Searching his own coat pocket, he produced a small notebook and a pencil and handed them to her. Mrs. Forward proceeded to make a careful record of the evidence as Mr. Planter continued:

"We will next read Exodus 12: 2 and 13: 4, 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. . . . This day came ye out in the month Abib.'"

"Is it not strange," said Mrs. McVitty, turning to her husband, "I do not recall having read or heard the word 'Abib' before. What is the meaning of the word?"

The Reverend McVitty adjusted his collar, cleared his throat, and silently nodded to Mr. Planter to proceed.

"Abib means 'spring or sprouting month,'" Mr. Planter explained, "'The month of green ears.' It also denotes 'the month of flowers.' It begins at the new moon of March or April. Bible time is lunar time, that is, governed by the moon. God's new year begins with the first new moon after the vernal equinox; that is, the first moon after the days and nights are equal. This is the first month of the year as instituted on coming out of the land of Egypt."

"I see; that is reasonable enough," said Mrs. McVitty.

"It does seem spring would be a very nice time to start the new year, and altogether fitting when all nature takes on new life," Mrs. Forward reflected. "I remember reading somewhere that that was when the world used to begin their year. Then, for some reason—I believe it was a few hundred years before Christ—the Roman government made some changes in the system, and things got into quite a tangle as the years went on."

"That is true," said Mr. Planter. "And here is another thing, Can you tell me what the week between December 25 and January 1 is called? Is it B. C., or is it A. D.?"

Mr. Forward looked surprised. The Reverend McVitty shifted uneasily in his chair; his shirt collar, which always seemed to fit him quite properly, now seemed much too small; and even his tie needed extra attention. These adjustments made, he carefully scrutinized his fingernails. Mrs. McVitty looked appealingly to her husband; while Mrs. Forward sat with pencil poised, like a court stenographer. This was interesting, and she did not want to miss a single point.

"Well, I never thought of it in that way before; this is new light to me!" exclaimed Mr. Forward.

"According to the present reckoning, the week between December 25 and January 1 is neither B. C. nor A. D. True Christmas and New Year's day must necessarily fall on the same day if Christ's birth is to mark the division between B. C. and A. D." said Mr. Planter.

The Reverend McVitty mopped his brow, looked at his watch, and cleared his throat. This time he spoke. "Really, really . . . I'm sorry . . . very sorry, but I think we should be retiring. That is all interesting, Mr. Planter, very interesting. But, as you realize, we are on this trip for the purpose of obtaining a much-

needed rest, and I am afraid it is even now past time that we retired."

MRS. McVitty was surprised, and a little disappointed. But her husband was unusually nervous tonight, so she reluctantly bade the group good-night and they retired.

Mrs. Forward looked after them in astonishment. "I thought surely that he, a preacher, would have given some evidence to refute all this, but he did not have a word to say," she mused.

Mr. Forward stroked his chin and thoughtfully answered, "Is there not a verse in the Bible somewhere that says something about people loving darkness rather than light?"

"Yes, indeed; Jesus said that in John 3: 19," was Mr. Planter's quick reply.

"I doubt if he even knew those verses about Abib were in the Bible," said Mrs. Forward. "But, Mr. Planter, have you any more evidence on this subject?"

"Why, yes. I will read to you what it says in Ps. 81: 3, 4, 'Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.' Now concerning these solemn feasts which cluster around the first of the year, we read in Ex. 12: 4, 'This day shall be unto you a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.' I will also read you First Samuel 20: 5, 6, 'David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: . . . If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice [feast, margin] there for all the family.'"

"But that was back in David's day," objected Mrs. Forward. "I would be much more interested in hearing something from Jesus' own time."

"Very well," agreed Mr. Planter. "Of course, you realize that both Joseph and Mary were descendants of the family of David, and the same yearly feasts were observed in New Testament times. Here in Luke 2, beginning at verse 40, is some plain evidence on the subject. 'And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit. . . . Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.' Here we have evidence that in Jesus' boyhood days His people were still keeping the Abib festivals, the same time as given by Moses."

"That is truly enlightening," confessed Mr. Forward. "I should say the Roman governor acted very wisely and sensibly in ordering the census at this particular time when they would be congregated in the cities."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Planter. "History also tells us that it was not compulsory for Mary to go to Bethlehem to be taxed; so we must conclude that she went to attend the Abib festivals."

"Well, who would have believed there was so much evidence in the Bible on this subject," said Mrs. Forward. "I never dreamed there was anyone in the whole wide world who knew the exact date of Christ's birth!"

"We have not yet covered all the evidence on this subject," said Mr. Planter. "But it must be getting late." He glanced at the now nearly empty lounge, and then at his watch, noting in surprise how late it had really become. "We can continue the subject tomorrow, if you wish," he added.

MIDMORNING found the Forwards and their new friend comfortably seated in deck chairs, their feet wrapped in blankets, enjoying the fresh air and sunshine, for the morning had dawned warm and balmy. It seemed as if spring were really here.

For the next hour they continued their discussion.

"Have you ever reasoned on the idea of shepherds being out on the plains in December?" queried Mr. Planter.

No, they had not questioned it, thinking Palestine a warmer climate.

"December in Palestine is the height of the cold, rainy season; the sheep are never out at such a time. Also, due to the rain and

the mud, travel would have been impossible at that season of the year."

"Why did the day for Christ's birth become changed to December 25? What is the reason the whole world celebrate it at that time now?" asked Mrs. Forward.

"The day became changed when the whole world was turned away from truth to fables," was Mr. Planter's reply, "just as Paul, in Second Timothy 4:3, 4, told us they would be. Daniel, likewise, prophesied that God's times and laws would be changed. History tells us that after the church had apostatized from the teachings of Christ, the dates of the principal religious festivals were fixed by ecclesiastical authorities without any regard for the day or month in which those events actually took place. It was a compromise with the heathen, an attempt to Christianize certain heathen feast days. We spoke last night of how Rome formulated a new calendar, abolishing true Bible time. Some of the months were named after the reigning emperor, others after pagan gods, and the days of the week were likewise given the names of pagan gods."

"I recall an article in our Denver paper last year," said Mrs. Forward, "admitting that December 25 was not the true date of Christ's birth; but it was also stated there was no possible way of knowing when He was born. How mistaken they were!"

All too quickly the shoreline began to appear in view, and Mr. and Mrs. Forward found it necessary to bid farewell to their new friend and hasten below to gather up their baggage. Before leaving them, Mr. Planter presented them with some pamphlets, and gave them an invitation to visit the Megiddo Mission in Rochester at their first opportunity.

"Perhaps we can come there next year on our vacation," said Mrs. Forward.

"We are beginning to realize that truth is the only thing worth while, wherever it is found," added Mr. Forward. "Already we see a glimmer of light in the darkness."

So saying, they shook hands and wished each other a safe journey home.

Mr. Planter went his way, rejoicing as a missionary does when he finds anyone genuinely interested in the Gospel message.

WHEN Mr. Planter arrived at the Grand Central Station, he had his bags checked and sat down to wait for his train to Rochester. It was then, as he sat contemplating, that the thought occurred to him, Why had he not enquired which train west the Forwards were taking? Possibly they could have made arrangements to be together. But it was too late now.

"Track 22—going west, Harmon, Beacon, Poughkeepsie, Hudson, Albany, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo," the announcer called.

Mr. Planter hurried forward. On the train he relaxed in a deep comfortable seat. He had just settled back for a little nap when he felt a hand on his shoulder, and a familiar voice exclaimed,

"Why, of all people, Mr. Planter! Why did you not tell us you were taking the same train?"

It was Mr. Forward who stood there smiling.

"We could not have arranged it any better," replied Mr. Planter. Observing that behind him were two empty seats, he said, "Why not turn the seats around so that we can all be together. It will make the trip seem much shorter with someone to talk to!"

"Nothing would suit me better," replied Mr. Forward, enthusiastically. "I will go and get Hazel at once. Won't she be surprised!"

The seats were soon changed about, and Mr. Forward and his wife were seated opposite Mr. Planter, who continued to unfold the wonderful truths of the Bible, as the train carried them through hamlet and town, by beautiful mountains, and fertile, rolling hills.

"Albany," the conductor announced.

There they alighted for a brief time, while Mr. Planter identified a few of the spots of interest in this capital city of New York State.

Back on the train again, they fell once more to discussing Christmas.

"Did you ever chance to read what Jeremiah the Prophet had to say about Christmas trees?" asked Mr. Planter, taking up his Bible.

"Why, I did not even know Christmas trees were mentioned in the Bible," said Mrs. Forward.

Mr. Planter read, beginning at Jer. 10:3, "For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."

Hazel Forward was silent a moment. When she spoke, she said to her husband, "My! Edwin, do you realize what pagans we have been all these years?"

"Yes, Hazel, I was just thinking the same," replied Mr. Forward.

Mr. Planter produced a newspaper clipping from his briefcase, and handed it to Mr. Forward. "Here is a short article from the Rochester Times-Union. Perhaps you will be interested in reading it."

Mr. Forward read aloud, "The early Christians refused to decorate their homes with evergreens because they considered the Saturnalia—a late December festival which honored Saturn, an ancient Roman god of harvest—to be a pagan observance. . . . Originally the Romans began their year with March, which gave the true value to the months named from the Latin numerals: September from *septem* (seven), October from *octo* (eight), November from *novem* (nine) and December from *decem* (ten). With the change of time their numerical value is no more significant."

"Utica," boomed the conductor, as the train slowed to a stop.

"By the way, what would hinder you folks from stopping off at Rochester for a few days?" enquired Mr. Planter. "You have been away a couple of months, you say; seems like a few more days would not hurt."

"I have already written our son, telling him when to meet us," said Mr. Forward, hesitantly. "They will be expecting us."

"If only we had thought about it before," added Mrs. Forward.

"You could send your son a telegram when you reach Syracuse," Mr. Planter suggested.

"Why, yes, I think we could arrange it," exclaimed Mr. Forward. This new feature to their trip was proving altogether interesting. It would be too bad to miss the best part of it all, he reasoned.

As Mr. and Mrs. Forward prepared the message for their telegram, Mr. Planter was also busy writing. At Syracuse, the messenger boy came through the coach, and Mr. Forward gave him his message. Mr. Planter, likewise, gave him another.

As they stepped from the train at Rochester, and entered the station, they were heartily greeted by two of Mr. Planter's friends, who, receiving his telegram stating that he was bringing guests, had driven to the station to meet them. Then began the short trip through the city to the headquarters of the Megiddo Mission.

"Isn't this a peaceful, refreshing place!" exclaimed Mrs. Forward, at the first glimpse of the spacious Mission grounds.

AT the Mission home, Mr. Planter and his two new-found friends were warmly greeted. Mr. and Mrs. Forward were instantly made to feel right at home.

The next day, April 11th, they were taken on a tour through the printing and mailing rooms, the school, and the church. They came to realize that while these people live manifestly separate from the world with its pride and folly, this organization is, nevertheless, a constant hive of happy industry—all members working together in the service of the Lord, that Bible truths might be disseminated to a world in darkness and a people prepared for the returning of Christ. During the course of the day, they made the acquaintance of numerous other visitors who had traveled from a distance to attend the Christmas celebration.

Seated that evening in the modest white church, waiting for the program to commence, Mrs. Forward commented to her husband that this had been one of the happiest days of her life.

The rostrum was banked with flowers, and their fragrance filled the church. All in all, the setting was very beautiful and spring-like.

Then the curtain rose. The drama which followed was deep and thought-provoking. THE QUEST OF THE AGES—the search for LIFE beyond the grave—has long engaged the earnest effort of explorers, scientists, theologians, in fact men and women from all walks and stations of life. But only through recognition of the Living God as the Almighty Source of life, and by compliance with His terms, can that pursuit end in achievement.

It was inspirational to the audience to witness the enactment of the various scenes showing the different characters who sought that glorious future life, esteeming it above all things earthly—good or bad.

Mr. and Mrs. Forward were greatly impressed with the earnestness with which the performers acted their parts. Surely these people were engaged in the very quest which they spared no effort to portray.

On the afternoon of Christmas day, April 12, the children presented a thoroughly delightful program, and the armfuls of sensible, useful gifts, which each received at the close, set every little face aglow. Mrs. Forward thought that they were the happiest, most lovable children she had ever seen anywhere. And, like as with their elders, their kindness and thoughtfulness one for another was remarkable and heart-warming.

She thought back to the Christmasses that she had known—Santa Claus, Christmas trees, toys, utterly lacking the reverence due the occasion; but now, at this Abib celebration of Christ's birth, the true spirit prevailed. What a contrast!

The closing feature to this beautiful Christmas service was a short but touching little drama centered around Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon, concerning whom Paul wrote what was perhaps the tenderest and warmest of all his epistles. Again Mr. and Mrs. Forward felt the force of the tie that binds true hearts in Christian love.

It was with regret that early the next morning they bade farewell to Mr. Planter and all their new-found friends. After a kind invitation to return as soon as possible for a long visit, and the assurance that they would gladly accept, they took their departure.

How surprised, they reflected, their children would be to learn that, after traveling nearly around the world, they had encountered the richest, happiest experience of their whole lifetime in the most unexpected spot right in their own land! THE END.

JESUS' LAST WEEK

(Continued from page 20)

once—after His resurrection. There was that morning by the Sea of Tiberias . . . I saw Him ascend to His Father, borne by the angels. And on Patmos I saw, in vision, His return and the glory of His Kingdom and the reward of the saints. Now the Plan of the Ages is clear. I marvel that we were ever so slow to understand His meanings.

I am busy and very happy in my work as bishop of Ephesus, but I know that soon I must join my brethren in the long sleep. Yet to me, as to them, it will be short; and, sustained by an unfaltering trust, I shall lie down in full confidence that I shall see my beloved Friend in that glorious Resurrection Morning when I rise to stand by His side, to be with Him and serve Him—forever.

THE END.

Talk not of strength, till your heart has known
And fought with weakness through long hours alone;
Talk not of virtue, till your conquering soul
Has met temptation and gained full control;
Boast not of garments, all unscorched by sin,
Till you have passed unscathed through fire within.



No Room!

"NO ROOM IN THE INN!"

Bethlehem was crowded. The inn was filled to capacity, not only with the country-folk gathered to celebrate the New Moon Feast, but also the hated Roman overlords, taxation experts of Cæsar.

We all know this story of the overflowing concourse, the late hour, the weary innkeeper, the urgent husband, the hasty preparation, the culmination—the birth of a King.

As we read the narrative now, we ponder and wonder what the innkeeper's reflection might have been afterward. Did he ever fully realize the opportunity he let slip—that of giving lodging to earth's future King?

Directing our thoughts so far backward, and finding no answer, they return like a boomerang, demanding of us as to *what* about ourselves? We all are innkeepers, and the opportunity to give space to the Christ—His life-giving message, His immortal truths, His perfect example—knocks at our door. Are we swinging wide the portals of our hearts, or must He turn away because there is "no room"?

From the "inns" of the world He is crowded out—politically, industrially, socially. Is there room for Christ at the peace table where nation with nation cannot agree? Is there room in the industrial world where strikes and disorder prevail? Is there room in the social centers where every unwholesome lust may be gratified? And how many of those professing religion actually give space to the Christ-spirit?

The innkeeper did not know whom he was turning away that long-ago night. We do. How great is our effort to make room in our lives, our homes, our businesses for the lofty and ennobling principles, the magnanimous and irreproachable spirit of Christ? Frankly, we entertain too many "guests" in our hearts—overlords—as those of Rome in the innkeeper's day. These overlords—our dominating desires and lusts—make great demands upon our time, our talents, our energy. Unless we evict them once for all, such lords of creation will demand the whole inn, every room, every service until, sad to say, there is no room left for Christ, His truth, to dwell in our hearts.

Pray to God that it may never be so!

THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS



A NEW SOURCE OF FAITH
IN THE SECOND ADVENT

NEARLY nine years ago it was announced to the world that some Bedouins had found, in a cave near the Dead Sea, several dusty rolls of parchment, one of them being identified as the book of the Prophet Isaiah. At the time the world wondered, and many still do, what effect the discovery would have upon our present Bible. The main question has been: Are the Dead Sea Scrolls likely to alter the Bible as we now have it?

The ancient Isaiah manuscript, together with other scrolls and uncounted thousands of fragments of still others, have come to be called the Dead Sea Scrolls. And since the original find, other caves have yielded still more scrolls and fragments. It is believed that a whole "library" was hidden away in the remote, uninhabited wastes on the shores of the Dead Sea.

Scholars, who are intrusted with the responsibility of examining the contents and translating the scrolls, say it may take 50 years to complete the work. Much of the difficulty lies in unrolling the rolls, for, being brittle with age, they often crumble at a touch.

Whatever scholars may reveal in the future remains to be seen, but a few important conclusions about the Isaiah scroll are most encouraging.

FIRST: Scholars are agreed that the scrolls were written between 200 B. C. and A. D. 70. For abundant reasons the earlier date is preferred. Archaeologists report that late Hellenic pottery and ancient coins found in the cave, point to the first or second century B. C. Further, examinations and comparisons with other early manuscripts lead to the conclusion that the Isaiah manuscript is to be dated 125—100 B. C. Solomon Birnbaum, one of our ablest paleographers—student of ancient writing—reports that he has made comparisons between the Isaiah manuscript and various inscriptions, and that on the basis of these studies he has concluded that the first half of the second century B. C. suggests itself as the date of the writing of the Isaiah manuscript.

These confirmations are important, since our present Bible is a translation from manuscripts of about A. D. 900.*

SECOND: Even more important is the close agreement between the newly found manuscript and the traditional Hebrew text which was copied much later. Millar Burrows, of Yale, indicates that there is nothing in this manuscript which can be called "a major addition or omission," and that there is "no important dislocation or disarrangement of the text." The substantial agreement between this ancient manuscript and those of a thousand years later shows the care with which Biblical manuscripts were copied. This adds greatly to our assurance concerning the substantial accuracy of the later manuscripts from which our English translations were made.

The question has arisen: Who hid the scrolls there, and when?

Scholars agree that a Jewish monastic sect, known as

the Essenes, probably produced this copy of the book of Isaiah from a still earlier manuscript and also some of the scrolls found with it, and that the whole "library" of their books was hidden in caves during the Jewish revolt against the Romans. Their community was destroyed by the Roman 10th Legion on its way to the siege of Jerusalem.

At this point science makes a worthy contribution. The scrolls were wrapped in linen, and sealed with a tarry substance. A bit of the linen, burned to charcoal in a laboratory, provided the pure carbon for the radio-carbon tests by which it has been determined that the scrolls so carefully preserved in the dry air of the desert cave, were wrapped in linen dated about A. D. 33.

This carbon test does not actually date the scrolls. It does show, however, that they were sealed and hidden by that time. That a considerable period of time had elapsed from the time the Isaiah scroll was first written to the time of its concealment is evident from insertions within the text and margin. The writing differs greatly in style and must have been inserted some generations later. Hence, if the scrolls were wrapped and hidden not later than A. D. 70, then certainly the Isaiah scroll was produced long before Christ's birth.

Importance of the Isaiah Manuscript

To us the importance of the Isaiah manuscript lies in its age which establishes its prophetic authority. Critics have ever been prone to discredit ancient sacred writings and place them on a par with present-day works. They have denied the fact of divine inspiration, saying that various events recorded in the Bible are simply statements of history, chronicled after the given event; and that no prophetic foresight is indicated. Now, the dating of the Isaiah scroll *prior* to certain stupendous events—which events that book predicts, and which later took place in perfect parallel to the prediction—forever nullifies their claim.

The dating evidence of the Isaiah scroll is certainly well-founded, or scholars, critical as they are, would never attribute it to that early date.

The dating of the scroll confirms the prophetic value of the book of Isaiah and of the entire Bible, as well; it witnesses to the fact that our Bible is true and indeed the work of God's holy men of old.

One principal feature of Isaiah relates to the birth of Christ. We read: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7: 14). In relating the birth of Jesus, Matthew verifies the virginity of Mary, and states that this was a direct fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Matt. 1: 18—25). The dating of the recently discovered Isaiah manuscript *prior* to that event classifies the passage as prophetic and not historic. Isaiah prophesied this event in the reign of King Ahaz, some 700 years before Christ. That Christ was born into the world, is a fact which cannot be disputed. And the fulfillment of that part of the Isaiah prophecy creates in us an eagerness to witness the fulfillment of more.

Many centuries before, Moses had also foretold Jesus' birth, and he added, "If thou say in thine heart, How

* The written Word was completed by A.D. 70. After that time no new divine revelation was received by man. However, today there are no first editions known to scholars, no original manuscripts in the authors' handwriting. All that exists is copies of copies of the originals. Until recently scholars depended on Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament dating from about the 10th century after Christ. The earliest complete New Testament manuscripts date from the 4th century.

shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When the prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken" (Deut. 18: 21, 22). In foretelling Jesus' birth, Isaiah spoke in the name of the Lord, and the prophecy was fulfilled according to his word. Here is someone we can recognize as the true Prophet of God. We can listen to him with confidence, knowing that his numerous other prophecies will also be fulfilled. For Isaiah spoke not only of Jesus' first coming, but more often of the far-off Day when He should return in power and glory to put down oppression, and rule the earth in righteousness.

Some of Isaiah's Prophecies

At His second coming, Isaiah informs us (2: 4), our King shall "judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people," and cause them to cease their production of armaments, and instead, convert their weapons of war into useful items. The nations will, in fact, be taught to learn war no more. Violence and destruction shall be no more (60: 17, 18), and the officers or co-rulers with Jesus will at last be righteous, with man's present inhumanity to man forever abolished.

Isaiah described the extent of Jesus' rulership (9: 6, 7). He will be King or Head of His government, which shall increase until it fills the earth and is established forever. As a result of His reign the poor at last shall receive justice. Men and women with beastly characteristics, whom the Prophet describes as the wolf, the leopard, the bear, or the lion (ch. 11), shall change their natures and learn to live decently in the society of the righteous. Universal brotherhood of man shall at last be realized, when nation shall dwell in peace with nation, race with race, and man with man.

When Jesus returns He will bring salvation for those who have overcome and await His coming (25: 9; 35: 4; 40: 10). Then the faithful shall receive their reward of life eternal. They shall be saved with an everlasting salvation. At His first coming Jesus taught the precepts whereby men may be saved. At His second coming He will carry to completion that salvation.

Those who have been afflicted with all manner of diseases shall at last be healed. The deaf shall hear, the blind see, the lame leap as a deer, and the dumb shall sing praises to the Eternal. Sickness shall be no more for the mortal nations (33: 24), and the life span shall be extended to a minimum of 100 years (65: 20).

All sorrow and mourning shall be no more; and for the faithful, death shall be swallowed up in victory (25: 8). Nor shall the righteous of the ages have died in vain, for, declares this Prophet of old: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (26: 19). Blessed thought! Should we fall asleep in death before Jesus comes, we shall rise again. Hope, of all hopes the greatest!—the hope of a resurrection from the dead is greatly strengthened by this Prophet whose words are certain.

Even the physical earth shall be transformed. The desert shall blossom as the rose. The parched ground shall become a pool of water (35: 1, 7). Men shall build houses

and plant vineyards, and enjoy the fruits of their labors (65: 21, 22). They shall have no fear of their property being destroyed by the ravages of war and their families taken captive. Nor shall they be in danger of being defrauded by unjust men.

Isaiah's picture of the Golden Age to commence with Jesus' reign as King of nations, has never been surpassed. Is it not a glorious hope to extend to troubled humanity? Jesus, our coming King, is the Great Physician who will heal the world's diseases; He is the Master Carpenter who alone can rebuild the ruins caused by man's sinfulness; He is the Perfect Lover who shall bind men's hearts in abiding brotherhood. The very thought of His coming revives hope, stirs the imagination, and stimulates every noble impulse within our hearts. It causes us to look forward to His coming with eager anticipation.

God's Ability, Man's Inability

These features of the new world and the Second Advent itself are not a wild guess of someone with only human foresight, but are delineated by the finger of inspiration which is accurate, precise, certain—as certain as the birth of Jesus which Isaiah likewise foretold.

In declaring His plan, God often calls our attention to His works of the past, certifying that in like manner as He demonstrated His power before, so He will do again (Isa. 46: 9, 10). He declares His intention and we can await the fulfillment with assurance. By contrast He calls upon man to do the same, to predict future events with accuracy, or else admit God's superiority.

"Now the Eternal cries, bring your case forward; now, Jacob's King cries, state your proofs. Let us hear what happened in the past, that we may ponder it, or show me what is yet to be, that we may watch how it turns out; yes, let us hear what is coming, that we may be sure you are gods; come, do something or other that we may marvel at the sight!—why, you are things of naught, you can do nothing at all!" (Isa. 41: 21—24, Moffatt).

Faith in the Future

The foregoing promises are but an interesting glimpse into the grand time to come. The book of Isaiah literally abounds with prophecies concerning the Second Coming and the blessings that will follow as a result of our King's reign.

We have always believed in the Second Coming, and we have never doubted the authenticity of Isaiah. The discovery and dating of the Isaiah scroll is truly a thrilling event of the last days. It confirms the faith we have held sacred for years, and inspires us to continue the noble task we have chosen as our life work, that of persuading as many people as we can to prepare themselves to enjoy with us the unspeakable bliss of that coming Day. Though the hours, and the days, and the months, and the years slip silently by and the day of the Lord's return seems to tarry, we can afford to wait and work in faith. In the past God has manifested in numerous ways His power and ability to carry out His plans. In like manner today we can safely assume that the Isaiah scroll hidden for so many centuries and discovered in our time, is but one way God has used to demonstrate to His people the certainty of His promises.

THE END.

The Angel of Gethsemane

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."

WITH these words the historian Luke records the heavenly messenger's visit with Jesus in His hour of trial in Gethsemane. What the angel did, or what strengthening words were spoken, we are not told. We would feel considerably enriched if we possessed a recording of that meeting, but the above words are all we have—nothing more.

The ministration of angels, as recorded by the sacred writers, provides one of the most fascinating and inspiring studies of the Scriptures. On numerous occasions angels comforted, warned, delivered, or instructed the people of God. Undoubtedly their ministry becomes all the more fascinating because in most cases they appeared on the scene just at the critical moment. We shall not pause at this time to relate details, but recommend to you the study of their interesting work.

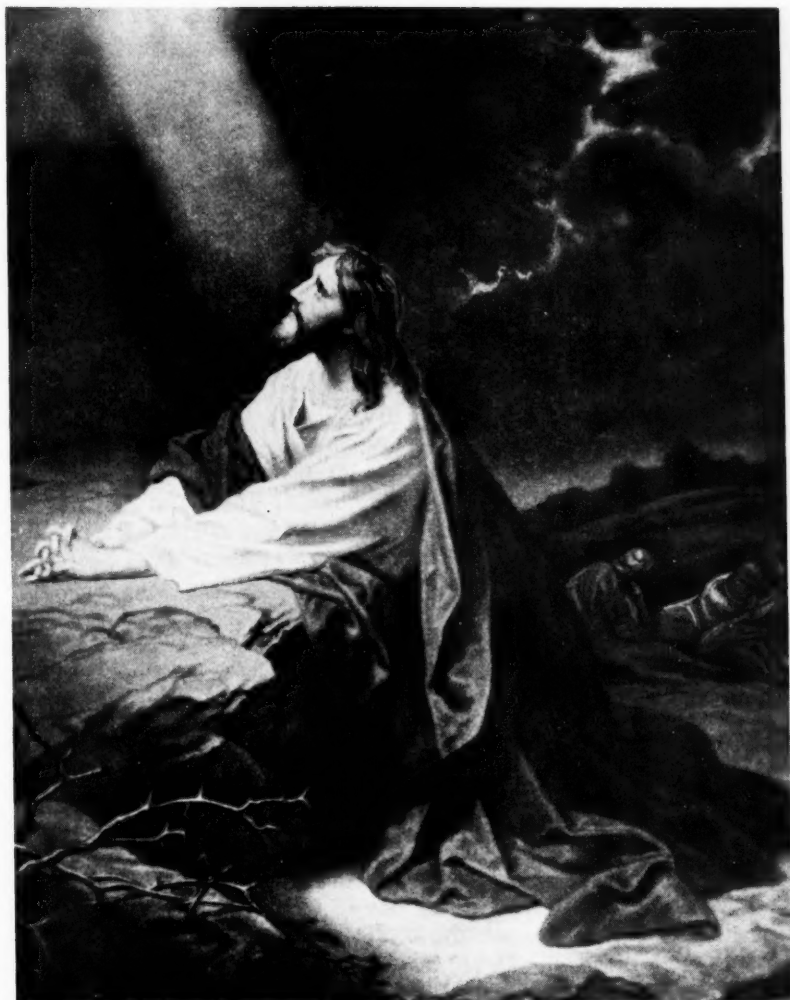
Long before Jesus' birth the plan of salvation for this planet was ordained and established. According to God's eternal purpose, they who would attain the glory and life immortal must pass through many tribulations and testings to prove their worth of character. Jesus, who was destined to be the King of kings, by no means was to be an exception. In all points the prophecies concerning Him relate that He was to be made, and was to be tempted, like His brethren.

His childhood, youth and manhood were spent with unequalled excellence. He mastered His training perfectly, and when the time for His public ministry arrived, He was ready. During this brief but eventful episode the thought of doing His Father's will was paramount with Him. Whether it was before a gathered multitude, or a lone individual; before the proud Pharisees, or lowly publicans; at a banquet, or in privacy with His chosen Twelve, He always exalted the Father, He always directed men's hearts to Him.

His life was so holy that no suspicion whatever could attach to Him. By stupendous miracles, such as accorded with the nature of His ministry, He placed the truth of the religion He taught beyond all controversy.

But a life so nobly lived is not without enemies. The leading men, especially the Pharisees and chief priests, whose crimes and vices He so freely reproved, early opposed Him and finally plotted to take His life. They were fearful of losing their honor and privilege if Christ should continue publicly to teach. Thus, with a foreknowledge of what awaited, and as the gathering darkness descended, we see Jesus in Gethsemane. The crucial hour was upon Him.

(Continued on next page)



Christ in Gethsemane

The Will of God

I worship thee, sweet will of God!
And all thy ways adore.
And every day I live I seem
To love thee more and more.

Thou wert the end, the blessed rule
Of our Saviour's toils and tears;
Thou wert the passion of His heart
Those three and thirty years.

And He hath breathed into my soul
A special love of thee,
A love to lose my will in His,
And by that loss be free.

Ill that He blesses is my good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will!

—Selected.

Desiring some human company, Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John. He said to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with me." He went a little farther alone and kneeled to pray. "Abba, Father," He said, "all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." Truly a bitter cup! He almost shrank from putting it to His lips. The arrest, the trial, the cruel mockings, the severe scourgings, the crucifixion—these awaited Him. Were He to deny His mission, all would be different. And as an added burden, as He returned to His disciples, they were asleep. Asleep, just when He needed them most!

Again, He prayed the same words, and yet again. And just at that moment, as He was weighted with the burden almost to the limit of His great endurance, there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening Him. Imagine, if you can, what the touch of that angel meant! So significant was that visit that He arose and faced the dreaded ordeal to the end without the slightest sign of denying His mission.

Through this last act of obedience Jesus overcame the world. Though He was put to death and locked securely in the tomb, the grave could not hold Him. He was resurrected; and later, in full view of His Apostles, He ascended to Heaven and was glorified in the Father's presence, from whence He shall return in glory as King of kings and supreme Ruler of the earth.

But in the meantime we, being in the flesh and subject to all limitations and weaknesses, must face our Gethsemane, our agonizing crisis. If we become the Christians God wants us to be, we cannot escape the cross. The Christian life is not one summer picnic day, it is not one happy drama. We shall have to take up our crosses daily, deny ourselves and follow and obey Jesus. How far? All the way. Then we shall be His disciples indeed. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ"; and again, "I die daily." All Christ's faithful followers must crucify their natural inclinations and ambitions. They must crucify every remaining lust in their bodies, every forbidden affection, and thought, and feeling, and passion in their souls till they are absolutely blameless in His holy sight. This is the cross. They must be cleansed by being emptied from vessel to vessel; they must be pruned till every unproductive part is removed; and they must be kept in the sevenfold-fire till they are purified as gold. In like manner God demands of His children every moment of their time, every mite of their money, every word of their mouths, and every beat of their hearts. And not until He gets it, can we truthfully say we have borne the cross with Jesus.

If we are to be one with Christ we shall have to suffer with Him. You will. I shall. We all must. Our individual lives are varied and different, our crosses may not be the same, but during the course of our pilgrimage, somewhere we shall meet our Gethsemane.

Some have met their Gethsemane in their own physical affliction. Many a parent meets it through the children loved the most. Others meet it in the loss of a companion; and still others when they have an intense desire to possess or to do something and the law of God says, No! it is unlawful for you; it is not right; it is not safe; it is not expedient. Whatever the cross, we must bear it; however bitter the cup, we must drink it. If we avoid it,

we shall miss the glory. The crucifixion of our will must be accomplished. There must be a resistance unto blood, striving against sin.

When these experiences come to us, others may know little or nothing about them. They may not understand, and we must face the darkness of an inescapable sorrow alone. There is joy in fellowship, there is mirth in feasting; the banquet halls are full, but grief weeps alone. Many guests had Cana, while Gethsemane had but one.

Alone—must we stand alone? If, in that unbearable hour, our sincerity is evident to the Father, we are not alone. We shall not be alone. The angel of Gethsemane will be there to strengthen when all other help has failed. We do not know what awaits us—we hope for blessed, happy experiences for all—but should we find ourselves in Gethsemane, and our Peter and James and John, a little distance behind, not fully understanding, or asleep, and we have to go farther without human aid, we shall not be alone, for the angel of God will be there to strengthen.

When an individual is faced with an overwhelming sorrow, and sympathizers who have never experienced a similar fate try to console, their efforts are usually futile. They do not understand, and the sorrowful, knowing it, is unaffected. But he who follows the pattern of the Master, he whose efforts are to put God first in his heart and His work before everything else, when such a one is met with a crushing experience, whatever it may be—the bitter cup that must be drunk, the sleeping disciples, the loneliness, or the kiss—there is One who understands. There is One who was in all things tempted as we are and mastered His every trial, and He will say, "I have been there. I know what it means."

When you come to your Gethsemane, remember your Master in the Garden. Remember, as you feel the unbearable weight of care, of trial, and sore temptation, how your Master prayed and how with resignation He said, "Thy will, not mine, be done." Recall with trust the justice of your heavenly Father and resolve to abide by His decision, and you will, in that dark hour, feel the support of the angel of Gethsemane, the support which will strengthen you to face whatever lies before you.

THE MESSIAH

(Continued from page 5)

die until they have seen their King. And then they may know that the cold hand of death shall never reach them. What a reward that will be for a lifetime of waiting and enduring!

When the Lord comes, attended by myriads of angels, mortals again shall witness a scene of splendor such as the shepherds beheld on that night when Jesus was born.

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It is Christmas Day again, the birthday of our King. Are we among the inner circle who know the meaning and the joys of this day? Shall we remain steadfast through the trials of life, so that when these earthly things shall shortly pass away we may have the privilege of looking upon the face of our Lord and walking by His side on Eternity's shore forevermore?

A Home Christmas Service

Order of Service

Hymn: "True Christmas Day."

Scripture Reading: Psalm 24.

Prayer

Hymn: "Some Day," No. 233, Megiddo Hymnal.

Sermon: "The Messiah."

Hymn: "Onward Go!" No. 182, Megiddo Hymnal.

Benediction

(Additional songs or readings may be added as time and circumstances permit.)

A New Year Wish for You

*New mercies, new blessings, new light on thy way;
New courage, new hope, and new strength for each day;
New notes of thanksgiving, new chords of delight,
New praise in the morning, new songs in the night;
New wine in thy chalice, new altars to raise;
New fruits for thy Master, new garments of praise;
New gifts from His treasures, new smiles from His face;
New streams from the Fountain of infinite grace;
New stars for thy crown, and new tokens of love;
New gleams of the glory that comes from above;
New light of His countenance full and unpriced;
All this be the joy of thy new life in Christ!*

Prayer

ETERNAL FATHER, We are grateful that we can gather on this auspicious day to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. We thank Thee for the day when Thy beloved Son came into the world, and for all that His life and example means to us. Inspire us with a fervent desire to know Christ, and to be one with Him in purpose and in obedience. With Thy truth in our minds, and Thy love in our hearts, may we reflect Thy loving-kindness and tender-mercy in all our dealings with others.

At this time we look back only to give thanks for Thy mercy. And as we take the forward look, grant us fresh courage. May we use our fleeting days to do Thy will, bearing our daily crosses willingly and joyfully, until at last we are worthy of a place in Thy eternal Kingdom. Amen.

Live for Christ; have a love for the home in glory.

March 31, 1956

True Christmas Day



1. 'Tis Christ-mas day, let each one sing High praise to God, our glorious King;
2. There is a Christ-mas day to come, May we be there bright as the sun,
3. In this New Year and Christ-mas day With hearts aglow let each one say,

'Tis A-bud day, it is the time To cel - e - brate in ev - 'ry clime.
For Christ will come and bid us shine As jew - els bright in world di - vine.
We will be led by Thy right hand, So we can reach sweet Beulah land."

Chorus
'Tis Christ-mas day, true Christ-mas day, As Shepherds heard the an - gel say,

Oh, think of that first Christ-mas song The an - gels sang when Christ was born,

Sweet "peace on earth, good will to men," To this we all can say, A - men.

Sweet "peace on earth, good will to men," We ech - o now as an - gels then.

Benediction

ALMIGHTY GOD, We thank Thee for the blessings of this day, for the Christian fellowship it has afforded, for the inspiration that is kindled in our hearts. May the flame of zeal that burns there not be quenched in life's ordinary days, but may it burn with increasing intensity until our dross is consumed and we are refined as gold for Thy eternal use. Amen.

It is a most fearful fact to think of, that in every heart there is some secret spring that would be weak at the touch of temptation, and that is liable to be assailed. Fearful, and yet salutary to think of, for the thought may serve to keep our moral nature braced. It warns us that we can never stand at ease, or lie down in the field of life, without sentinels of watchfulness and camp-fires of prayer.



The World's Long-sought Springtime Comes with the Second Advent

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. . . . For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."—Isa. 55: 10, 11; 61: 11.

Then the Whole Earth Shall Experience Rebirth

PHYSICALLY—

The saints of the ages—the believers who through the eye of faith looked forward to this glorious Day with its meeting and greeting and prepared the requisite white garments of righteousness—shall experience the grand birth to endless, immortal life.

The face of the earth shall spring forth in beauty when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

A nation shall be born at once to people the earth in righteousness.

POLITICALLY—

There shall no more be two nations. One King shall be king to them all.

Divine government with officers of peace and exactors of righteousness shall bless the earth. Holy laws shall disseminate mercy and justice to all.

RELIGIOUSLY—

They shall all know the Lord from the least unto the greatest. "And all flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord."

Then shall the common Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man unite all peoples in joy and happiness.

Finally shall spring forth in fullest, grandest harmony the sweet, heavenly song which angels sang the night of Christ's birth: "*Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men.*"